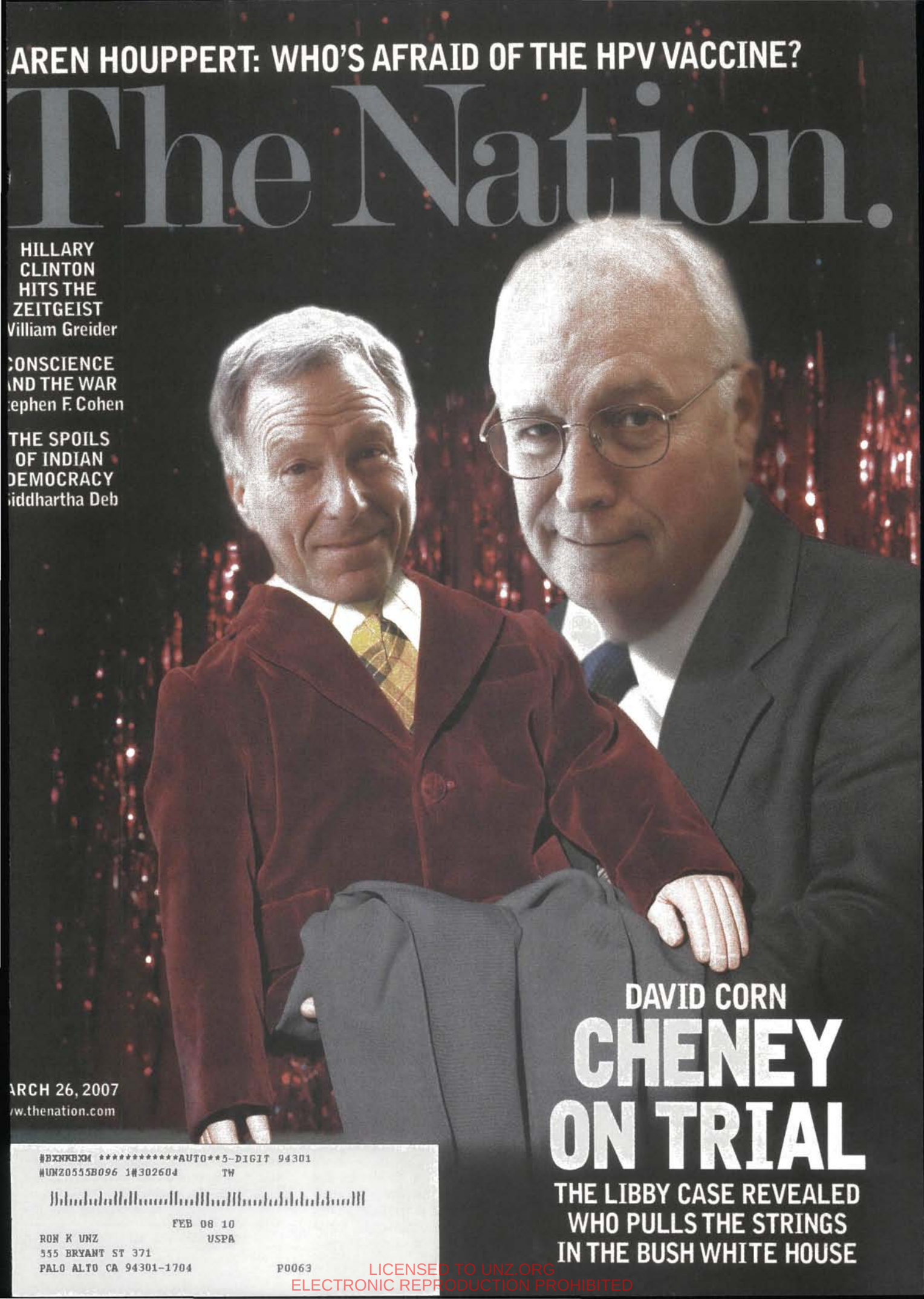

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LETTERS

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

MOLLY: DEEP IN THE HEARTS OF TEXAS

Pittsburgh

■ Thank you for the tribute to the late, great Molly Ivins ["Molly, in Her Own Words," Feb. 26]. It is at times like these that *The Nation* means so much to us far-flung fellow travelers.
Abrazos, BONNIE PFISTER

Barton, Vt.

■ Molly Ivins—definitely one of the greats, and so young. Just when we need her most. I treasure my copies of *Shrub* and *Molly Ivins Can't Say That, Can She?* and reread them as needed, which is frequently. MARTHA GORDON

Tryon, NC

■ I was much saddened to learn of the death of Molly Ivins. I can never forget a hilarious "interview" between her and Calvin Trillin aboard a *Nation* cruise several years ago. What a joy it's been to have them both in our lives.
JUDITH M. JANES

Munich

■ A Molly quote you left out: "Our very own dreaded Legislature is almost upon us. January 9 and they'll all be here, leaving many a village without its idiot," from a December 2000 column. JOHN BROWNER

San Miguel de Allende, Mexico

■ I opened your February 26 issue anticipating a tribute to Molly Ivins, one of the funniest and most passionate defenders of the Constitution and the rights of the underdog. I found a half-page with five or six Ivins quotes. Ah well, I thought, her death has caught them with nothing in their morgue and no free space for an article. So you can imagine my disappointment upon opening the March 5 issue. No article on Molly. A giant has passed from the scene. Do you not feel a grave silence where her rollicking voice once rang out? MELANIE NANCE

Fear not. Readers will find more tributes to Molly at www.thenation.com. —The Editors

New York City

■ When are you folks going to have a memorial service in New York for the great Molly Ivins—a rip-roaring, roof-lifting, irreverent event to celebrate this powerful political satirist and to counteract all those vapid, sexist obituaries that have reduced her work to being "tart-tongued"? We're all bereft, and we need to bang some pots in the street. RUTH EISENBERG

Carrollton, Tex.

■ I went to school with Molly—one year ahead of her, but way behind her in life lessons. We went through the same conversion, fought the same fights, loved the same heroes, hoped for the same tomorrow. But the woman everyone called just Molly was way ahead of me because she had too much fun getting there. As she put it, "*These* are the 'good old days.' Enjoy them now. Remember the motto of all Texas liberals: 'It could always be worse—and probably will be after the next election.'" Molly liked Texas country music, Tex-Mex food, Austin politics, parties in particular and life in general. And she wrote as often about that joy as about any outrage that cut into her generous heart.

I heard her speak at a Dallas bookstore a few years ago, where, after a few remarks, she asked, "Well, what do you folks want me to talk about?" One guy standing in the back called, "Tell us a story about Texas, Molly." So she proceeded to tell the story of the East Texas legislator who returned home from a legislative session and was shot dead by his wife (true story). But that wasn't the end of the story. His constituents were so ignorant, or so grateful, they elected his wife to finish his term. Later I watched as Molly signed books and conversed with the crowd, hearing their concerns, encouraging them all, one by one, telling them they weren't alone, exhorting them to keep fighting. "Don't be afraid to resist," she told us. "You won't die from it."

Years ago, I heard her on NPR opening a convention on "The Literature of Texas." She said you can't say that about most states, the literature of, well, say, Florida. There really was a literature of Texas, and a Texas mind. And that was only the beginning of the unusual things you could say about Texas. What I liked best about Molly was that even when she was writing about Texas at its worst, she could make you envy the people who live here. So go on, my friends, with my favorite passage from Molly Ivins, the conclusion of a column from thirteen years and three seasons ago:

"Aside from that, we're all fine. It's springtime in Texas. The bluebonnets and the Indian paintbrush are out in south Texas, the ocotillo is unfurling its red flags in the Big Bend, and the whoopers are back on the Gulf Coast. The cattle have calved, the redbud's blooming in Austin, and the little-yellows—we have more than 600 varieties of small yellow wildflowers here so no one ever bothers to learn their names—are showing up in the Panhandle. While the East Coast went through the Great Blizzard of '93 the zone-tail hawks soared in our clear blue skies, still and steady on the updrafts and playing tag on the downs. The horses are frisky, it's up to eighty in the afternoons, and the lush green that follows a rainy winter here carpets the Great State. May spring be upon you, too." CAROLYN SUMNER

BUY HIM SOME PEANUTS AND...

Brooklyn, NY

■ Here's my reaction to Terry Eagleton's admonition that as a leftist, I gotta give up baseball, a point he raised in his review of Barbara Ehrenreich's *Dancing in the Streets* ["Party Politics," Feb. 12]: Don't tell me what to do! As far as I'm concerned, leftists will gain more power when we embrace human contradictions and reject the right wing's simplistic either/or approach to existence. We get ourselves in trouble whenever we proscribe or prescribe individual, as opposed to governmental, behavior. Personally, I can juggle a passion for baseball with a passion for politics. Besides, baseball has historically served as a vital playing field for America's racial consciousness. So is it wrong for leftists to admire Willie Mays? Finally, does Eagleton truly imagine that if "ordinary people" (and I consider myself one of those as well as a leftist) don't gather (in integrated groups, by the way) to collectively scream at umpires, they'll choose instead to convene in cramped "cell meetings" arguing the minutiae of political strategy? I say, take a roll call. All leftists who love baseball (or any sport) and manage to remain politically active, stand up—and send Eagleton a box of Crackerjacks. SHERI STEIN

HIS BEEF—WELL, THAT BEETS ALL!

Statesboro, Ga.

■ As a vegetarian for twenty-three years, I have long been exasperated with people who take it upon themselves to denounce vegetarianism. I've been told that God created animals for humans to consume; that Jesus ate meat; that our teeth and digestive systems prove we were made to eat meat; that humans have to eat meat to survive; that the savage behavior of predators justifies our own savagery; that Hitler was a vegetarian (as if—what?—a steady diet of Big Macs could have averted the Holocaust?); that slaughterhouses use humane methods; that animals don't feel fear or pain; that nobody gives a shit if animals do feel fear or pain; that meat is too tasty to give up; that plants have feelings, too.

Daniel Lazare makes some valid points in "My Beef With Vegetarianism" [Feb. 5], but he also trots out several of these same old arguments. He ends his essay by smugly implying that vegetarians are missing out when they refuse life's great carnivorous pleasures, such as eating "some rangy old rooster that's had more lovers than most of us can dream of." On the heels of such a breathtakingly ridiculous justi-

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PRINTED MARCH 7 VOLUME 284, NUMBER 12

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EDITORIALS

Time to Fix Healthcare

The need to expand access to affordable healthcare is rapidly emerging as the top domestic policy issue in the 2008 presidential race. And no wonder: With the number of uninsured now up to nearly 47 million, and more than one-third of that total consisting of households with family incomes of $40,000 or more, lack of health insurance has become a concern not just of the poor but also of the middle class. Moreover, soaring medical costs—increasing in large part because at least one of every five healthcare dollars goes to administrative costs and insurance company profits—are a worry even to those who have some form of insurance. More than half of personal bankruptcies today are caused by illness or medical debts.

There's no mystery about the fix Americans want: Nearly two-thirds of those surveyed in a recent *New York Times*/CBS poll say the government should guarantee health coverage for all Americans. Half said they'd willingly pay as much as $500 a year more in taxes to pay for universal coverage. To do that, this country needs to establish a single-payer system—one inspired by Canada and other developed countries but distinctly American in approach. There's already legislation, with seventy-eight co-sponsors—the United States National Health Insurance Act (HR 676)—that would accomplish this by expanding and improving the existing Medicare system. The popularity of such an approach, endorsed March 6 by the AFL-CIO executive council, is illustrated by the ease with which California legislators passed a single-payer plan last year—only to have Governor Schwarzenegger veto it. In late February, the plan was introduced again, as part of a reform-from-below push that is seeing states tackle the healthcare crisis.

Ultimately, however, America needs a national fix.

Americans have lost hope that the Bush Administration will do anything to address the national healthcare crisis. Only 24 percent of those in the *New York Times*/CBS poll said they were satisfied with Bush's handling of the issue. And that number will surely shrink with recent revelations about the deplorable conditions at the Army's Walter Reed Hospital—another reminder of this Administration's incompetence. But so far most of the major presidential candidates have failed to take advantage of Bush's low standing to advance bold proposals.

Among the candidates, Congressman Dennis Kucinich has a long record of embracing single-payer proposals. Unfortunately, he is a lonely leader. The front-running Democratic contenders remain vague and cautious. Senator Barack Obama says, "I am absolutely determined that by the end of the first term of the next President, we should have universal healthcare in this country." Senator Hillary Clinton says she would enact "health insurance for every child and universal healthcare for every American"—with specifics "yet to come." Former Senator John Edwards moves beyond rhetoric to a plan: He would require everyone to have insurance and require employers either to provide coverage or pay into a fund to provide it. But although he reaches out to labor on other issues, Edwards is unwilling to embrace HR 676, which has earned support from nine international unions, seventeen state federations and sixty-three central labor councils.

Voters have to demand more if they want more. Obama at least recognizes the frustration of Americans for whom meaningful healthcare reform has been a dream deferred at least since the collapse of the Clinton Administration's bureaucratic proposals of the mid-1990s. The Clinton plan rejected single-payer and embraced a complicated hybrid that relied too heavily on the same insurance companies that had failed to make healthcare affordable and accessible. "We can't afford another disappointing charade in 2008, 2009 and 2010," says Obama. He's right. But he and his fellow front-runners should recognize that as long as they avoid talking about single-payer and continue to tinker around the edges of the current system, they are players in the charade.

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COMMENT

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SUBMISSIONS: Queries only, no manuscripts. Go to www.thenation.com and click on "about," then "submissions" for a query form. Queries may be mailed to The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. SASE for poems.

The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the second week in January, and biweekly the third week of July through the second week of September) by The Nation Company, L.P. © 2007 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, L.P., 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149, or call 1-800-333-8536. Publications Mail Agreement No: 40041477. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Dept. or DPGM, 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3. **When ordering a subscription, please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions.** Basic annual subscription price: $52 for 47 issues. Back issues $4 prepaid ($6 foreign) from: The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. The Nation is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

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Conscience and the War

Unless the United States withdraws its military forces from Iraq in the near future, a war that began as an unnecessary invasion based on deception and predictably grew into a disastrous occupation will go down in history as a terrible crime, if it hasn't already. For Americans of conscience, Iraq has therefore become the paramount moral issue of our time.

Those of us who were against the war even before it began were often disdained, but now, after four years, only the most myopic or callous among its many well-placed supporters can deny the catastrophic consequences. By inspiring legions of anti-American terrorists where there were few, by straining the US military to its breaking point, by alienating traditional and potential allies abroad, by frightening other states into acquiring new weapons and by provoking popular revulsion around the world, the war has undermined our real national security, from Russia, Afghanistan and the Middle East to the "Homeland." And by already spending more than $400 billion, suffocating other policy initiatives and polarizing the nation, it has prevented the domestic reforms this country urgently needs.

But it is the war's human costs that must be emphasized above all else. The Bush Administration and its bipartisan enablers have already squandered more than 3,100 American lives and maimed tens of thousands more for an unworthy and unwinnable military adventure whose declared purpose has changed repeatedly—from capturing Iraq's (nonexistent) weapons of mass destruction, to fighting Al Qaeda, to deposing a tyrant, to spreading democracy and now to countering Iran. As a result, the families of those American victims have been left without even the solace of knowing their sacrifices were not in vain.

Still worse, all innocent life being equal, is the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe the US war and occupation have wrought in Iraq itself. Since 2003 that society has been decimated. Anywhere between 58,000 and 655,000 are estimated to have been killed, and a great many other bodies have been shattered, not to mention the thousands inhumanely imprisoned and mistreated; approximately 4 million have been driven in fear from their hometowns and villages, a figure increasing by 50,000 every month, about half of those out of the country; and much of its once modern social and economic infrastructures have been pounded into rubble. Among the major casualties is Iraq's middle class, a prerequisite of stability, whose professions, prospects and notable religious tolerance have been all but destroyed, along with many mixed Shiite-Sunni marriages and extended families. "This," lamented a young Iraqi, "is civilization gone backwards." The US war is not solely responsible for these tragedies, but it made them possible.

All of these consequences grow steadily worse and will continue to do so, as every recent US intelligence report tells us. Indeed, events have become so horrific and undeniable that even long-complicit leading figures in both American political parties now speak of "withdrawal"—but, with very few exceptions, not actually a prompt, determined or complete withdrawal. Even at this late date, most of them are merely "symbolic" opponents of the war, content mustering just enough courage to resist the

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COMMENT

Administration's proposed military "surge" or its hints of expanding the conflict to Iran.

These belated, halfhearted critics give various reasons for opposing a real end to the American occupation, reasons not entirely unlike the justifications given by the Bush Administration and its "withdrawal through victory" accomplices. None of their rationalizations, considering the ever-growing disaster, are compelling. In particular:

§ They warn that a near-term US exit would result in a failed Iraqi state, plunging that country into violent civil war and chaos and turning it into a "breeding ground" for terrorists. But that has already occurred because of the US invasion. No truly functioning state exists in Iraq today, only a pseudo-"sovereign" government whose effective authority does not extend far beyond its own offices in the Green Zone. Moreover, Iraq is already, by any criterion, in the throes of civil war, chaos and even ethnic cleansing (euphemistically called "sectarian violence"), while the US occupation has bred hordes of native terrorists since 2003 and become a bloody mecca for foreign ones.

§ It is added, in that connection, that an American withdrawal must await US-led regional diplomacy to stabilize Iraq and prepare the way for a larger Middle East settlement. But no amount of foreign diplomacy can stop the kind of zealous bloodletting rampant in Iraq. And even if it could, few if any of the Middle Eastern governments needed are likely to accommodate America in any meaningful ways while it is so brutally embedded in their region. Nor is this Administration likely to make the kind of concessions, especially to Iran, that might persuade them to do so. Truly productive multilateral diplomacy on larger issues in the area will be possible only when withdrawal has begun.

§ Apologists for prolonging the occupation also say that a US military departure would expand Iran's influence and Iraq's sectarian strife throughout the Middle East. But that too has already occurred because of Bush's war. It is the four-year American military presence itself more than anything else that has both enhanced Tehran's standing and spread new political and religious conflict in the region. Here too a US withdrawal is the first necessary step toward reversing those developments.

§ Finally, it is said America must "stay the course" because it has a "moral obligation" to the Iraqi people. But given the horrors unleashed on those people since the US invasion, the only moral course is withdrawal, along with a pledge to help fund the country's reconstruction—a promise still unfulfilled despite $30 billion to $45 billion purportedly spent—if Iraq at last has an effective and peaceful government. It is true that an upsurge of violence may occur when the United States departs, but that will be so whether the departure is sooner or later, the essential difference being that many more people—Americans and Iraqis—will die in the interim. In reality, widespread killing in Iraq will never end until the US-led occupation ends and one side or the other in the civil war, deprived of foreign occupiers to provide resources or incite more enemies, finally prevails or both settle for a compromise. The Iraqi people seem to agree. In surveys taken last year, large majorities favored an immediate US withdrawal; and nearly 80 percent believed it would reduce the violence in their country.

Underlying these bipartisan excuses for staying in Iraq, indefinitely in effect, is the lingering illusion that some kind of American "victory" is still possible. Hence the self-serving assertions, particularly by the war's early and unrepentant supporters across the political spectrum, that it was a good cause "botched" by the Bush Administration's "shocking incompetence"; and hence their insistence that the occupation be given more time "to succeed" by providing the Washington-backed Iraqi regime with additional US troops and "benchmarks," training more Iraqi forces (though the 300,000 already equipped haven't helped), or by dividing the country into three parts, as though having failed to cope with one divided nation, the United States can do so with several antagonist ones.

Obscured by these rationalizations is the real lesson of the American-Iraqi tragedy: The United States does not have the right, wisdom or power to invade and occupy another country, still less an ancient civilization, with the ultimate purpose of redirecting that nation and its civilization. Such a mission will never result in any kind of victory, only the morally toxic political and humanitarian catastrophes we are witnessing and, if allowed to continue, crimes not soon forgotten or forgiven.

Principled opponents of the war must therefore be clear and unyielding on what an expeditious US withdrawal means, an essential issue also obscured by the Administration and its reticent critics. It means the removal from Iraq of all US troops and their equipment, as well as those Iraqi citizens who, fearing for their lives because they served the occupation, wish to leave. Once that decision is made, whether by the current Congress or an antiwar President, the US military will know how to implement it expeditiously, certainly within a few months. Meanwhile, all American troops in Iraq should be moved from offensive and other forward positions to strictly defensive ones in order to protect them and to reduce US complicity in the bloodletting. Here diplomats can help by negotiating with Iraq's insurgent leaders and neighboring governments for a safe US exit and havens for Iraqis who must flee.

That kind of determined and complete withdrawal is now a moral imperative—the only way to begin redeeming our nation for its role in the death and destruction in Iraq. The time for political evasions and ambiguities on the part of leaders in both parties, especially would-be Presidents, is long past. Every month this war continues, more than 3,000 Iraqis and 100 Americans are likely to die, each new death further darkening the stain on America's honor and on the conscience of its true patriots.

STEPHEN F. COHEN

Stephen F. Cohen, a Nation *contributing editor, is professor of Russian studies and history at New York University.*

Senator Inevitable

Considering the formidable advantages Hillary Clinton has assembled for 2008, why should anyone feel sorry for her? Because the Senator is in a trap, and many of her assets have swiftly turned into liabilities. This predicament is largely of her own making but also of changed circumstances she did not foresee. Front-runners have often fared poorly in Demo-

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COMMENT

Schlesinger & The Nation

In the early 1980s *The Nation* invited the eminent historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who died February 28, to join a panel. Professor Schlesinger declined the invitation, saying he would have to be "a monumental masochist" to lend himself to a proceeding sponsored by *The Nation*, a magazine that had been attacking him in its pages for the past thirty years.

In his 1949 book *The Vital Center*, Schlesinger had described *The Nation* (along with *The New Republic*) as "a fellow traveler of the fellow traveler." As America's premier self-proclaimed liberal anti-Communist, although he continued to write book reviews for the magazine through 1950, he wanted nothing to do with the front half of *The Nation*, which he saw as an anti-anti-Communist magazine.

And for many years, although both the magazine and the professor were on the liberal side of the divide in American politics, the ill will was mutual.

In 1951 in a weekly column he wrote for the *New York Post*, Schlesinger attacked *The Nation*'s Carey McWilliams, along with two other non-Communist left-liberals (Tom Emerson and Stringfellow Barr) who had signed a letter proposing a national conference on civil liberties, as follows: "None of these gentlemen is a Communist, but none objects very much to Communism. They are the Typhoid Marys of the left, bearing the germs of infection even if not suffering obviously from the disease."

Which prompted McWilliams to respond in *The New Statesman* that Schlesinger "spoke the language of McCarthyism with a Harvard accent."

A year or two later, when *Nation* editor and publisher Freda Kirchwey declined to publish an article by the magazine's former art critic Clement Greenberg accusing its foreign editor, Álvarez del Vayo, of being a Stalinist, she also declined to publish a letter from Schlesinger, in support of Greenberg, that castigated *The Nation* for "betraying its finest traditions...when it prints week after week these wretched apologies for Soviet despotism." In other words, no love was lost.

Then in 1990, Professor Archie Singham, a member of the *Nation* editorial board, longtime Caribbeanist and activist-scholar, called. Cheddi Jagan, three-time popularly elected Prime Minister of British Guiana and by then leader of Guyana's largest party, was in town, and would we like to invite him for a luncheon seminar in our offices?

In the late 1950s and early '60s, Jagan, the first elected Marxist leader in the Western Hemisphere, had declined to take sides in the cold war. For that reason, among others, after the Bay of Pigs fiasco the CIA, encouraged by the Kennedy White House, covertly worked to destabilize the Jagan administration, with the result that in 1963 he was voted out of office. Now he was thinking of making a comeback, and Singham had an idea: Why not invite Schlesinger? In *A Thousand Days*, his memoir of the Kennedy years, Schlesinger seemed to have had second thoughts about Jagan and his own role at the time.

Once again, we invited Professor Schlesinger, but this time he said that although he had a class later in the afternoon and might have to leave early, he would be pleased to join us. Lunch began promptly at 1, Jagan held forth on his plans for a possible new presidential run and soon it was approaching 2:30. Professor Schlesinger interrupted: He had to leave, but before he did he had something he wanted to say. And he proceeded to apologize to Jagan for what he called "a great injustice" he and his Kennedy colleagues had helped to perpetrate.

Then in February 2002 The Nation Institute was putting together a panel at the Society for Ethical Culture on "Civil Liberties After September 11." Phil Donahue had agreed to moderate, Molly Ivins was coming up from Texas, and it seemed a natural to invite Schlesinger, whose thoughtful oped pieces on why it was a mistake to sacrifice civil liberties in the name of national security more and more seemed to overlap with *Nation* values. He agreed to come, appeared on the panel and was at his most elegant and eloquent.

In the years since, we continued to have our differences—especially over matters multicultural, not to mention his reviews of books covering the cold war years by *Nation* contributors. These past differences were over nontrivial matters, but more and more our thoughts about the present and future seemed to converge. It is probably presumptuous to say that we learned from each other, but the public sphere will be the poorer without Schlesinger's voice and activist historian's perspective informing the debate.

VICTOR NAVASKY

cratic nominating contests during the last thirty years, especially when establishment insiders promoted an aura of inevitability for them. Hillary is a candidate for the same fate.

Inevitability actually is (or was) her core strategy. For six years, talented ranks of Clintonistas have assiduously worked Washington and Wall Street to create that expectation for her. They promoted romantic yearnings for a Clinton restoration in the age of George W. Bush. They amassed awesome advantages to scare off less famous opponents or, if need be, to crush them. Senator Inevitable has all the money and brains and influential connections. Plus, she has a rock-star-popular husband, the ex-President, who's a brilliant strategist and performer.

What could go wrong? Well, things changed—dramatically—and the front-runner now finds herself scrambling to catch up with the zeitgeist. The watershed election of 2006 confirmed that Bush and the conservative order are in collapse. That inspires Democrats to embrace a far more ambitious sense of what's possible. Senator Clinton, the brainy policy wonk conscientiously calculating her next move, suddenly seems miscast for an era when Democrats are on offense and bolder ideas are back in play.

Clinton's great vulnerability was captured brilliantly by Barack Obama in a single sentence, without a mention of her name. "It's time to turn the page..." People are looking forward, not back, he declares. People long for a promising new generation in politics.

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COMMENT

Let's not turn back to old fights, the acrimony of decades past.

Nothing personal. But Hillary Clinton is the past.

When she cites the family accomplishments—his and hers—or reminds audiences that "Bill and I" stood up to the vicious right-wing assaults, it sounds almost as though she is offering a co-presidency. If anyone misses the connection, the former President seems to be everywhere, touting his own thoughts on how to govern the country (presumably cleared with her, but who knows?).

This is the central tension in Senator Clinton's campaign. It's what makes her sound conflicted. Does she intend to emulate the risk-averse, center-right juggling act by which her husband governed? Or, as she sometimes suggests, will Clinton II be more aggressively progressive, less beholden to business and financial interests, more loyal to the struggles of working people? Senator Clinton tries to have it both ways: running on her husband's record and popularity, yet hinting she will not be like Bill.

That sounds like a tough sell. Some Democrats love him forever, others still loathe him for what he did or failed to do in office. The Senator seems to be betting that nostalgia will prevail among party faithful, perhaps accompanied by amnesia. In any case, this contradiction undermines her aura as a forceful leader. Bill Clinton had the persuasive skills to get away with this, charming even those he had betrayed. Hillary Clinton may lack the insincerity to pull it off.

Senator Clinton's struggles are visible in her repeated efforts to recalibrate her positions on major issues—adding a little muscle each time but always a step or two behind public opinion. A year ago, she was still straddling the gut question of withdrawing from Iraq. Now she wants action in ninety days. She is molting a little, but still sounds more comfortable as a hawk.

The demands for an apology on her original go-to-war vote is not the point. It reflects a deeper suspicion that Hillary is as cynical as Bill on the fundamental matter of warmaking. One recalls Bill Clinton's scolding advice to Democrats after they lost the 2002 Congressional elections. People, he said, would "rather have someone who is strong and wrong rather than somebody who is weak and right."

Globalization and trade—another deeply divisive issue for the party—has produced a similar dilemma for Senator Clinton. She keeps ratcheting up her position, step by step, even voting against CAFTA in 2005. But she cannot embrace fundamental reforms (and mean it) without colliding with her husband's championing of free trade and with Robert Rubin, whose Wall Street money-raising machine will be a major factor in financing her campaign. If she did divorce herself from the Clinton-Rubin doctrine, that would create other problems for her.

The Senator has one more problem, and his name is Bill. She and the Clintonistas probably regard the former President as their greatest asset, but he has the personal potential to become a fatal liability. I do not refer to the scandalous behavior that over the years has occasionally humiliated his wife (though that risk provides constant grist for insider gossip). I mean the threat that Bill Clinton simply won't get off the stage. He loves to talk and collect popular adulation, and people love to hear him. Last fall, he held a glamorous sixtieth birthday party in New York that lasted three days. He has the capacity—unconsciously or otherwise—to steal his wife's show just by being himself.

One thing we know from the past is that Bill can't help himself. Self-control has never been his strong point. But, as we also know from experience, Hillary Clinton and her campaign staff can't control him either. His egotism poses a real and present danger to her ambitions.

I am mischievously reminded of Lurleen Wallace, another political wife, who stood in for her husband when George Wallace was ineligible for another term as governor of Alabama. But that seems unfair. Hillary Clinton is accomplished in her own right and she has twice been elected as a senator from New York.

A more poignant comparison is with Senator Edward Kennedy, another inheritor of the family mantle. After his older brothers were killed, Teddy Kennedy was propelled by legendary expectations that he would someday run for President and restore the Kennedy name to the White House. When he finally did run but lost his party's nomination Kennedy, ironically, was freed to fulfill his real talent as a legislator and become the courageous and savvy liberal lawmaker of lasting fame. If Hillary should lose in '08, perhaps she will be liberated too. WILLIAM GREIDER

CALVIN TRILLIN

A Dispiriting Thought On the 2008 Presidential Election Campaign

The pressure's up, and building every day.
November's only twenty months away.

Bush Amigo's Para Pals

When George W. Bush embarked on his five-country tour of a left-leaning Latin America in early March, he no doubt looked forward to visiting his one remaining ally in the region: the man he calls "mi amigo," right-wing Colombian President Álvaro Uribe. But a recent series of explosive revelations of Colombian government collusion with paramilitary thugs ought to put a damper on the occasion. The first came November 9, when Colombia's Supreme Court issued warrants for the arrest of three *uribistas* in Congress for their alleged ties to the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), Colombia's murderous right-wing paramilitary group. Rivals of the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the paras have grown increasingly powerful over the past decade, dominating the drug trade, even as they have become beneficiaries of the so-called Peace and Justice Law, which last year granted amnesty to some 32,000 paras in exchange for their disarmament.

Then, on February 15, five more senior senators were arrested

(*Continued on Page 30*)

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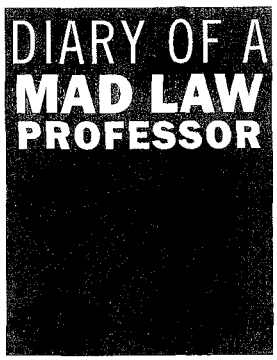
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Judge Not?



For the last several months, I've been fretting about the policy implications of the case of Ashley, Seattle's so-called "pillow angel." Ashley is a 9-year-old child who was born with a debilitating disorder that caused her brain to stop developing at about the age of three months. She is sensate, she smiles, she seems at times to recognize her family members and to enjoy music. But she can barely move and will never learn to speak. When she was 6, Ashley's parents subjected her body to a series of interventions ostensibly designed to keep her small, easy to lift and thus less prone to bedsores and to render her permanently childlike.

To these ends, her breast buds were removed, in part because of a family history of breast cancer but, more immediately, to accommodate the harness straps that hold her upright. According to her parents' blog, "developed breasts...would only be a source of discomfort to her." Her appendix was removed because were she to get appendicitis it was feared she would not be able to communicate her distress. She was given sufficiently high doses of estrogen to insure that her growth plates would close, limiting her height. This, despite the fact that estrogen at such doses carries other risks, most significant an increase in the incidence of blood clots; but her parents felt that being able to easily lift her outweighed that possible detriment. Her uterus, too, was removed, to spare her the pain of menstrual cramps "or pregnancy in the event of rape."

I think this course was wrong for Ashley. Who of us, with full capacity to consent, would undergo the painful invasiveness of a full hysterectomy just to prevent cramps or as a prophylactic against rape's violations? Why then should it be permitted in the case of someone who has no capacity to protest? Even assuming a life at the hands of sexual predators were so predestined a fate, why not birth control pills?

This was also very wrong as a matter of ethics and public policy. There seems to be, in the national debate about this case, a popular consensus that the parents were well motivated, so who are the rest of us to judge? That sentiment is expressed loftily, as in Peter Singer's *New York Times* op-ed ("she is precious not so much for what she is, but because her parents and siblings love her and care about her"), and crudely, as in an anonymous online posting to the disability rights organization FRIDA ("I think your group is a pain in the neck...if and when something happens to the caregiver, who will take care of the disabled person...your group or the state who really does not give a hoot.")

I do not question either how much Ashley's parents love their daughter or how overwhelming their responsibilities must be. I do, however, fault the hospital establishment for allowing these surgeries to happen. In essence, the hospital allowed ethical questions about Ashley's long-term care and comfort to be privatized by deferring so unquestioningly to her parents' posited love. The hospital created an extreme presumption in favor of (often cash-strapped) caretakers that is heedless of medical necessity. Given a presumption premised on "love" rather than medical imperative, why not remove all her teeth to spare her the pain of cavities? Why not excise her fingernails to spare her the pain of accidentally scratching herself? Why not remove one of her healthy spare kidneys and donate it?—that might make her and the world a little lighter. If I'm not the one who loves her, who am I to judge? That facile shrug allows us to ignore that Ashley's body was not altered to correct any physical need of her own but to address tenuous suppositions about long-term social pressures: She'd be more included in family events, she'd be less attractive to rapists (if not child molesters), she'd be more portable for the convenience of caretakers. Real medical benefits, such as lessened risks of cancers or appendicitis, were entirely speculative.

The public discourse seems to sniff at regulatory oversight as some kind of invasion of privacy. But as medical ethicist Harriet Washington's new book, *Medical Apartheid*, points out, the very notion of privacy is inflected by the aesthetics of gender and race and class. Ashley is—and now always will be—"cute," "little" and "a white girl," as bloggers bluntly put it. This embodiment evokes a very particular social response. It is harder to imagine doctors so compliantly agreeing to castrate a boy, say, in order to allow his wheelchair seatbelt to fit better. Similarly, I wonder if a poor black child would have been so easily romanticized as a "pillow angel."

The glib libertarianism of "Who are you to judge?" masks not only these inequalities of social response but also our failure to grapple with the woeful state of a healthcare system that leaves all Americans, even middle-class families like Ashley's, so burdened. We are the wealthiest nation on earth, yet we cannot find the resources to provide the common medical devices that would have better enabled Ashley's family to care for her, unaltered, in their home: a simple hoist, mattresses that prevent bedsores, the assistance of home healthcare workers. Ashley's parents apparently felt driven to the lengths they went to because they did not wish to institutionalize her as she grew older, bigger, more cumbersome. They feared her institutionalization with good reason, that fear reflecting but a fraction of the anxiety generated by our public health crisis.

As I write, there are hearings in Congress about conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center—mice, mold, overcrowding and impenetrable bureaucratic ineptitude. It is, according to commentators, an issue that has "touched a public nerve." It's about time. As tragically high numbers of soldiers return from Iraq with shattered bodies and traumatized minds, the scandalous deficiencies of our public hospital system, and the scandalous costs of our private one, have never been clearer. Unlike Ashley, these men and women cannot be surgically miniaturized or pixied up with heavenly pet-name metaphors. They are full-grown, complex, their bodies heavy with sorrow, with need. Perhaps it is they who will provoke a collective re-examination—a call to judgment—of our polity's obligations to broader notions of human dignity. ■

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ERIC ALTERMAN

A Consequential Life

Among the more unremarked achievements of the late Arthur Schlesinger Jr. is how little enmity he inspired. Excluding the ideologically obsessed sourpuss Norman Podhoretz and the young philistine Jonah Goldberg, nary a disparaging word has been heard about this most combative of liberal lions since his recent death. This is surprising because, leaving aside politics, for the balance of his remarkable sixty-plus years as a historian, journalist, pundit, film critic, presidential adviser and marathon martini drinker, Schlesinger consistently refused to recognize the boundaries that most intellectuals accept as a matter of course. As a result of this refusal, he led one of the most consequential lives of the American twentieth century.

Nothing about Arthur Schlesinger Jr. was fashionable (including, especially, those goofy bow ties). When he first came to prominence as a historian, he challenged the emerging power of the "consensus school" historians by refashioning the previous era's "progressive" interpretation of American history, which focused almost exclusively on class and economic division, to allow for the importance of ideas and ideology in shaping a nation's political life. Although his work was unapologetically "presentist" in orientation—the historian "wrote the way he voted" went the quip—almost all of it remains standing today, which is an astounding accomplishment, given how much history has since been uncovered. Schlesinger's excavations of the ages of Jackson and Roosevelt remain required reading. And for all his emotional commitments and personal connections to Camelot, his magisterial studies of the careers of President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy hold up almost as well. (I don't think anyone has improved on his epigram, "John Kennedy was a realist brilliantly disguised as a romantic, Robert Kennedy, a romantic stubbornly disguised as a realist.")

Writing on the website of the History News Network, presidential historian Alonzo Hamby expresses the common regret that Arthur "became so enmeshed with the Kennedys, if only because the entanglement diverted him from his historical vocation and left him open to attack as a court historian." But who wants to live life so as to avoid attack? Schlesinger's sideline as America's "quintessential 'engaged' intellectual," as historian Kevin Mattson has called him, was clearly one he relished, but he never insisted it was for everyone. Indeed, he admired his friend Richard Hofstadter, a historian who purposely retained his critical distance from politics and, while working in the Kennedy White House, praised Murray Kempton for his tough tack toward power, thereby offering an "antidote to the danger that those with influence might take themselves too seriously."

Schlesinger never changed his stripes as a liberal anti-Communist and New Deal Democrat, and his most controversial arguments feel awfully prescient today. While *The New Republic* and *The Nation* were still strangely schizoid about Stalin—though more supportive than not—Schlesinger issued warning after warning to the American left about the dangers posed by the US Communist Party. Three years before publishing *The Vital Center* (1949), writing in *Life* magazine, he compared Communists to Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, who carry "their infection of intrigue and deceit wherever they go." With their systematic mendacity and duplicity, "Communists are engaged in a massive attack on the moral fabric of the American left." Even so, Schlesinger was able to make crucial distinctions. He rejected the notion that US Communists posed a threat to the Republic. "The Communist party is no menace to the right in the U.S. It is a great help to the right because of its success in dividing and neutralizing the left. It is to the American left that Communism presents the most serious danger."

But of course liberal anti-Communists did not exactly cover themselves in glory when it came to defending free expression in the face of McCarthyist blacklists. The last time I had lunch with Arthur—at a fancy East Side bistro he favored—I asked him if he felt anti-Communist liberals had allowed their hatred of Stalin and Soviet totalitarianism to overshadow their commitment to civil liberties at home. But like Edith Piaf, Arthur regretted *rien*. "We had a Two Joe policy of opposition back then," he insisted. "We were against Stalin and against McCarthy." True, I tried to argue, but was the balance the best one? After all, while Stalin was one of history's worst mass murderers, he turns out to have presented no genuine military threat to the United States or even, as it turns out, Western Europe. Joe McCarthy untrammeled, on the other hand, did more damage than anyone to America's democratic institutions until George W. Bush. Arthur shrugged and ordered another martini.

Schlesinger's more recent intraleft controversy arose when he made another prescient argument about a danger on the left: this was his short 1991 book on Afrocentrism and multiculturalism, *The Disuniting of America*. Although it was one of his slighter efforts, intellectually, Arthur recognized then, as few did, that by making a fetish of racial and ethnic divisions, the left was playing into the same divide-and-conquer politics that the corporate elite has always used against America's working classes.

In his final years, Schlesinger was revitalized by his anger at what the right was doing to America. He warned of "ominous preparations for and dark rumors of a preventive war against Iran" and complained of leaders who "do not know enough history, and they duplicated the stupidity of the Vietnam War" in Iraq. He dissociated himself from the liberal hawks and criticized those who sought to replace Communism with "terrorism" as America's all-purpose enemy. He was too good a historian to allow the neocons' hysterics to undermine the lessons he had spent so much of the past century learning and teaching. "History is the best antidote to illusions of omnipotence and omniscience," he wrote in one of his final published articles. "It should forever remind us of the limitations of our passing perspectives. It should strengthen us to resist the pressure to convert momentary interests into moral absolutes." ■

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ARTICLES

CHENEY ON TRIAL

THE LIBBY CASE REVEALED WHO PULLS THE STRINGS IN THE BUSH WHITE HOUSE

DAVID CORN

It was fall 2003. The news had broken that the Justice Department, at the request of the CIA, was investigating the leak that outed Valerie Wilson as an undercover intelligence officer, and FBI investigators were targeting White House officials. With a firestorm under way, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff, went to see his boss. Libby hadn't passed any information about Valerie Wilson to right-wing columnist Robert Novak, who first published the leak in a July 14, 2003, column. But he had talked to other reporters about Valerie Wilson and her CIA connection before the leak occurred. And he also knew that Karl Rove, White House über-strategist, had spoken to Novak about her days before the leak column. That is, Libby knew a fair bit about the episode.

Libby told Cheney he had not been one of Novak's two Administration sources for the leak, and he offered to disclose to the Vice President everything he knew. But Cheney did not want to hear it; Libby said no more.

Shortly after that, Libby, responding to a request from investigators, came across a note in his files indicating that in early June 2003—weeks before the Wilson affair began—Cheney had told him that the wife of former Ambassador Joseph Wilson worked at the CIA's Counterproliferation Division, a unit of the agency's clandestine operations directorate. (At that point, the former envoy had spoken only privately to two reporters about his CIA-sponsored trip to Niger, during which he had concluded there was not much to the intelligence report that Iraq had been uranium-shopping there.) The note was a significant discovery. A key issue in the investigation was who in the Bush Administration had spread information about Wilson's wife to undermine Wilson's charge that the White House had twisted the prewar intelligence (a criticism Wilson made public in a July 6, 2003, *New York Times* op-ed). And Libby had uncovered evidence showing that Cheney had conducted his own research on Joseph Wilson early on, learned about Valerie Wilson's CIA job and shared the information with Libby. Cheney apparently was the first White House official to discuss Valerie Wilson's specific place of work.

With a criminal investigation in full force, Libby told Cheney, I first heard about Valerie Wilson from you. From me? Cheney replied. The Vice President then tilted his head and, as Libby later said, "that was that." The two discussed it no further.

These vignettes of how Cheney does business—in a mob-boss sort of way—emerged from the recently completed obstruction of justice trial of Scooter Libby. The former senior White House aide was found guilty of four of five counts in a criminal case narrowly focused on whether Libby had lied to the FBI and a grand jury when he claimed he had no official knowledge of Valerie Wilson's CIA employment in the days before the leak and that he had merely shared with two reporters (Matt Cooper, then of *Time*, and Judith Miller, then of the *New York Times*) scuttlebutt about Wilson's wife that he had heard from *Meet the Press* host Tim Russert.

The jury accepted the prosecution's case that Libby had gathered information on Wilson's wife before the leak and then—after a criminal investigation was launched—tried to conceal what he had done. But beyond resolving whether Libby had mounted a criminal cover-up to hide his—and perhaps Cheney's—involvement in the leak episode, the trial exposed the inner world of Cheney's crew. The proceedings also proved, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the Bush White House was neck-deep in the Valerie Wilson leak (even if Novak's original source was then–Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage) and that the White House lied when it claimed otherwise.

Libby described his don't ask, don't tell meetings with

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Cheney during two appearances before the grand jury in 2004. For three days, jurors in the criminal trial listened to audiotapes of this testimony—and they could hear the disbelief in special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald's voice as he questioned Libby about these conversations. After the leak investigation began, Fitzgerald noted, George W. Bush had requested that anyone with information come forward. So, the prosecutor asked, Why didn't Cheney want to know what Libby knew? Libby had no explanation. Why didn't Libby insist on spilling all to Cheney? The Vice President, Libby replied, had no desire for the information. Why didn't Libby tell Cheney or anyone else in the White House that Rove had spoken to Novak about Valerie Wilson—especially since White House press secretary Scott McClellan had declared it "ridiculous" to suggest Rove had been involved in the leak? "It wasn't what I was most concerned about," Libby told the grand jury. The trial jurors listening to Libby on tape could have been forgiven for wondering if he and Cheney were adhering to an unspoken Sopranos-style version of plausible deniability.

During the Libby trial, a clear picture emerged: Cheney ran his own duchy within 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Though Cheney was not on trial, his shadow draped the proceedings. Testimony and evidence showed that three months into the Iraq War—when no WMDs were being found and the situation in Iraq was deteriorating—the Vice President took it upon himself to counter Joseph Wilson's criticism of the White House, even before Wilson went public. When *Washington Post* reporter Walter Pincus was sniffing around in early June 2003 to learn more about an unnamed ambassador who had gone to Niger because of a request from the Vice President, Cheney, after collecting information on his own about Wilson's mission, dictated talking points to Libby. Libby then handed Pincus a semi-cover story: that it had been an aide to Cheney, not the Vice President, who had asked for more intelligence on the Niger charge a year before the war.

After Wilson's op-ed created a stir, Cheney directed Libby to leak selective portions of the National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq's WMDs to Judith Miller at a private breakfast meeting at the St. Regis Hotel on July 8, 2003. Cheney even went to Bush to have the President declassify the NIE for this private leak. This act of automatic executive declassification (known only to Bush, Cheney and Libby) was unprecedented, as Libby later told the grand jury. Rather than make the full NIE available to all the media, Cheney and Libby decided to share pieces that backed the Administration's use of the Niger charge with a journalist who had reported stories supporting the Administration's contention that Saddam's Iraq was a storehouse of WMDs. They did not tell Miller that the NIE contained dissents on Niger and other WMD issues or that Cheney and Libby had recently received memos from the CIA indicating that the Niger intelligence had been spotty. It was at this meeting that Libby, according to Miller, told her for the second time that Wilson's wife worked at the CIA.

Judith Miller ended up not writing about the NIE or Wilson's wife. Her reporting had come under question within the *Times*. Selecting Miller for the handout, Libby told the grand jury, proved to be "a poor choice." But Cheney was not done. As the war raged, he was busy managing his own damage control and wanted this material made public by a simpatico media outlet. So he ordered Libby to leak parts of the NIE to the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*. Libby, though, did not have a close relationship with the editors at the newspaper's neoconnish editorial page. But Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz did. At Libby's direction, Wolfowitz disclosed slices of the NIE to the *Journal*. And the *Journal* dutifully ran an editorial that quoted from the not yet publicly available NIE to argue that Bush had been correct to cite the Niger charge in his prewar State of the Union address. "This information, by the way, does not come from the White House," the editorial said. (Cheney and Libby were not sharing with their press contacts the information—also not yet public—that the CIA had repeatedly warned the White House not to include the Niger charge in earlier Bush speeches.)

During the Libby trial, a clear picture emerged: Cheney ran his own duchy within 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Libby had about a dozen national security aides working for the office of the Vice President—not the National Security Council. This was about double the staff that Vice President Al Gore maintained during the Clinton years. But more important, the OVP, as its denizens call it, independently pursued policies and developed press strategies. When the controversy exploded over Bush's use of the Niger charge, Karl Rove and the White House senior staff pondered how to respond, but Cheney and Libby took their own steps, without always consulting Rove or National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. During his grand jury appearances, Libby described awkward (for him) meetings where senior White House aides discussed declassifying the NIE without realizing Cheney had already persuaded Bush to do this so Libby could slip it to selected outlets. (Cheney and Libby even cut Cathie Martin, Cheney's communications director, out of the loop at key junctures.) Libby also told the grand jury he and Cheney might have discussed telling reporters about Valerie Wilson's CIA employment—but that he could not recall having done so.

When the criminal investigation began in late September 2003, Cheney and Libby found themselves—at least momentarily—at odds with Bush's senior aides. In the midst of the media frenzy, Scott McClellan declared publicly that Rove had not been involved in the leak. Libby, according to his grand jury testimony, wanted similar treatment—for, like Rove, he was the subject of media speculation about the leak's origins. He went to McClellan and White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card and asked to be absolved publicly. They turned him down. Then Libby complained to his boss. Cheney wrote a brusque note—presumably for McClellan—that said, "Has to happen today. Call out to key press saying same thing about Scooter as Karl. Not going to protect one staffer & sacrifice the guy that was asked to stick his neck in the meat grinder because of the incompetence of others." As Ted Wells, Libby's lead lawyer, told the trial jurors, Cheney was angry that the White

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Suffering from Chronic Pain? For Solutions, Read On...

Up to 30 million Americans suffer from under-treated chronic pain.[1] Families suffer with them. For most, suffering is completely unnecessary.

Problem: Medical schools do not provide sufficient curriculum time to pain management nor do most residency programs.
Solution: Encourage medical schools to prioritize teaching pain management per "best practice" as recommended by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)[2] and also provide educational workshops for physicians already in practice.

Problem: Even when properly informed, doctors are often afraid to follow "best practice" guidelines for patients who require large amounts of medication or even to accept pain patients out of fear of being targeted by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).
Solution: Seek another doctor if your prescription fails to relieve your pain. If you are unable to obtain adequate medication, complain to your senators and congressman and urge them to investigate the DEA's failure to respect "best practice" and persecution of conscientious physicians. (Conscientious physicians tend to attract extreme chronic pain sufferers, and hence prescribe greater quantities of opioids in general and huge doses to some patients as warranted. Thus they attract the scrutiny of overzealous DEA agents and prosecutors who either don't understand "best practice" or are seeking headlines to divert attention from their overall failure to prevent wide scale criminal diversion of licit and illicit drugs.)

Problem: Many patients suffer needlessly because they are either too stoic to complain or they mistakenly fear addiction.
Solution: Educate patients about the importance of reporting unrelieved pain, and make them aware that opioid treatment is rarely addictive.

Problem: Loved ones often underestimate the debilitating effects of chronic pain and discourage taking dosages as prescribed.
Solution: Involve family members in pain treatment consultations. Make them aware that their loved one's pain affects the entire family and can be successfully treated medically.

You are entitled to "Best Practice" treatment. Demand it!

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1) "Pain Facts: An Overview of American Pain Surveys," American Pain Foundation, from the web at http://www.painfoundation.org/print.asp?file=Library/PainSurveys.htm, last accessed Nov. 22, 2005.
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House was rallying around Rove but not Libby. In Cheney's mind, Libby had leaked information to help the White House beat back the criticism that it had manipulated the case for war, and Cheney believed the CIA had screwed up by not yanking the Niger charge from the State of the Union speech. He didn't want Libby twisting while Rove ducked.

But Cheney, looking to blame the CIA for the White House's Niger problems, was in a bubble. He was ignoring the fact that the White House in mid-July 2003 had conceded that the CIA had repeatedly warned Bush's speech writers and the National Security Council to excise the Niger allegation from Bush's speeches before the State of the Union address. The Administration had surrendered, but Cheney and Libby were still fighting that war.

The White House did clear Libby within days, when McClellan said that he had spoken to both Rove and Libby "so that I could come back to you and say that they were not involved." But this Cheney-facilitated declaration was not an accurate absolution. Nor was it any more honest than the White House claim, as enunciated by McClellan, that the leak was "not the way this White House operates" and that "if anyone in this Administration was involved in it, they would no longer be in this Administration." The Libby trial presented evidence that at least three White House senior aides—Rove, Libby and Ari Fleischer, press secretary at the time of the leak—had spilled information about Valerie Wilson's classified position at the CIA. This was indeed how the Bush White House operated—and Rove and Libby apparently did not tell McClellan the truth. "Rove lied," Wells declared in his closing argument. Yet, as Wells noted early in the trial, Rove continued to work at the White House while his client ended up in the courtroom.

In keeping Cheney and Rove out of the line of Fitzgerald's fire, Wells managed to preserve Libby's ultimate escape: a presidential pardon.

Before the trial started, at a December 19 court hearing, Wells declared, "We are calling the Vice President" as a witness. But this was more bravado than legal strategy. Cheney could have repeated on the witness stand his statement that Libby is "one of the most honest men I have ever met." But how useful an endorsement would that have been coming from an unpopular politician who symbolizes the Administration's credibility problems? Had Cheney taken the stand, Fitzgerald, during cross-examination, could have thrown a series of potentially embarrassing questions at him about his own part in the Wilson affair.

In fact, Fitzgerald had prepared for a cross-examination that would have lasted hours. But Cheney was spared by Team Libby—as was Rove. Though Wells suggested there had been a White House plot to get Libby (as well as a CIA plot, a State Department plot and an NBC News plot), he was not willing to put Cheney or Rove on the hot seat to prove the point (which apparently was beyond proving). In keeping Cheney and Rove out of the line of Fitzgerald's fire, Wells managed to preserve Libby's ultimate escape: a presidential pardon.

In his closing argument at the trial, Fitzgerald zeroed in on Cheney. Noting that Wells had accused the prosecution of placing a "cloud" over the Vice President, Fitzgerald declared, "There is a cloud over what the Vice President did." Cheney's and Libby's actions had caused Fitzgerald to be suspicious of Cheney's involvement in the leak episode. "We didn't put that cloud there," Fitzgerald told the jury. "That cloud remains because the defendant has obstructed justice and lied about what happened." It seemed that Fitzgerald believed he had not been able to sort out fully Cheney's participation because Libby misled the investigators. Libby was no fall guy for Rove, Fitzgerald was saying; he covered up for Cheney. And this "cloud," Fitzgerald noted, continued to rest above the White House. "Don't you think," Fitzgerald asked the jurors, "the FBI, the grand jury, the American people are entitled to a straight answer" about who did what in the leak episode?

The straight answer never came. After Valerie Wilson's cover was blown, outraged Congressional Democrats demanded a special prosecutor be appointed to investigate and uncover what had transpired—but they miscalculated. Fitzgerald's job was not to ascertain the full truth but to determine if a crime had been committed and if anyone ought to be prosecuted. That mission drove him to subpoena journalists and even imprison Judith Miller for eighty-five days—establishing what could be a troubling precedent for other prosecutors and reporters. But from his perspective, he had little choice. Fitzgerald believed Cheney's top aide had lied to the FBI and a grand jury to protect himself and possibly the Vice President (and Fitzgerald suspected Rove had also misled the investigators). Fitzgerald felt he couldn't walk away from this perjury, even if he could not indict anyone for the actual leak, and he concluded that he needed the testimony of several reporters to determine if Cheney's chief of staff had tried to stonewall a criminal investigation related to a national security matter.

Still, Fitzgerald's investigation and the subsequent trial were not designed to provide the public with the complete story. The public, for example, has not learned how Rove managed to keep his job; what Bush did or did not know about Rove's part in the leak; or what Bush and Cheney told Fitzgerald when he questioned them.

At the end of his closing argument, Wells got weepy. After declaring Libby to be the victim of a run-amok prosecutor who had relied on witnesses with faulty memories, he asked the jurors, "Give him back to me. Just give him back." He choked back a sob. Responding to Wells's melodrama, Fitzgerald argued to the jury that Libby "stole the truth from the judicial system.... Your verdict can give truth back."

After ten days of deliberation, the jurors gave Fitzgerald what he desired. Though the case—as lawyers on both sides repeatedly stated—was not about the Iraq War and the White House's credibility, it was about the truthfulness of Cheney's senior aide, whose lies emerged from the Administration's effort to defend itself from the charge it had misled the nation into war. The verdict that now hangs over Scooter Libby is also a cloud that darkens the sky above the President and the Vice President. ■

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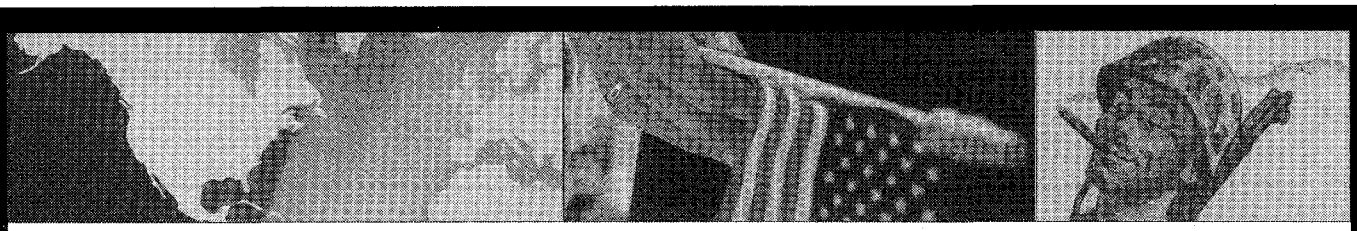

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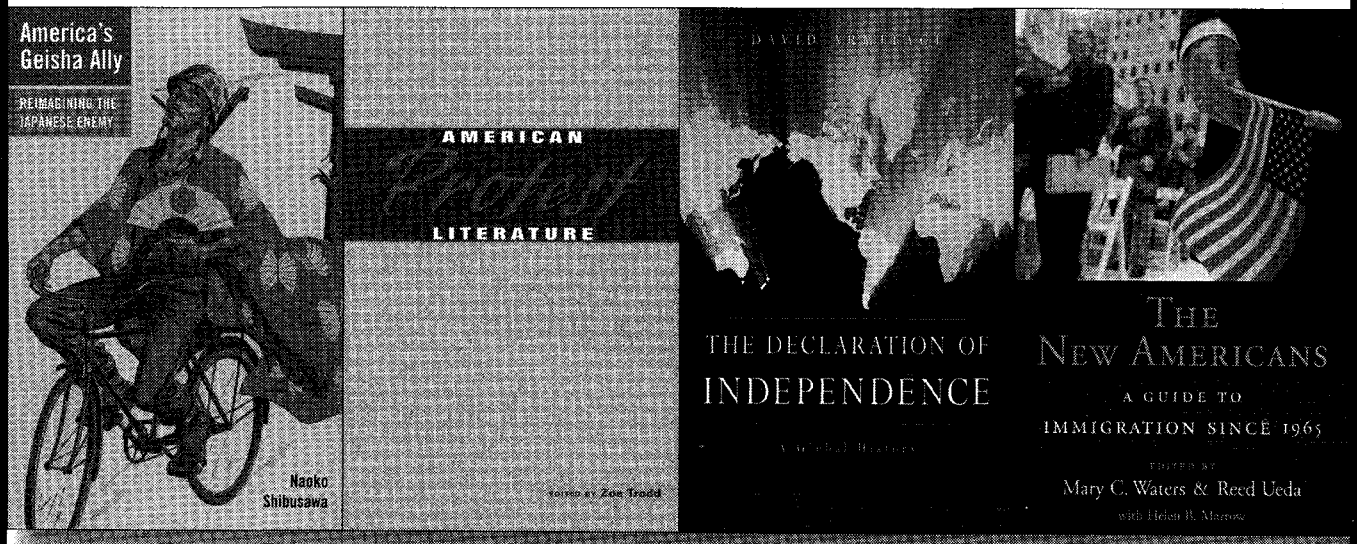

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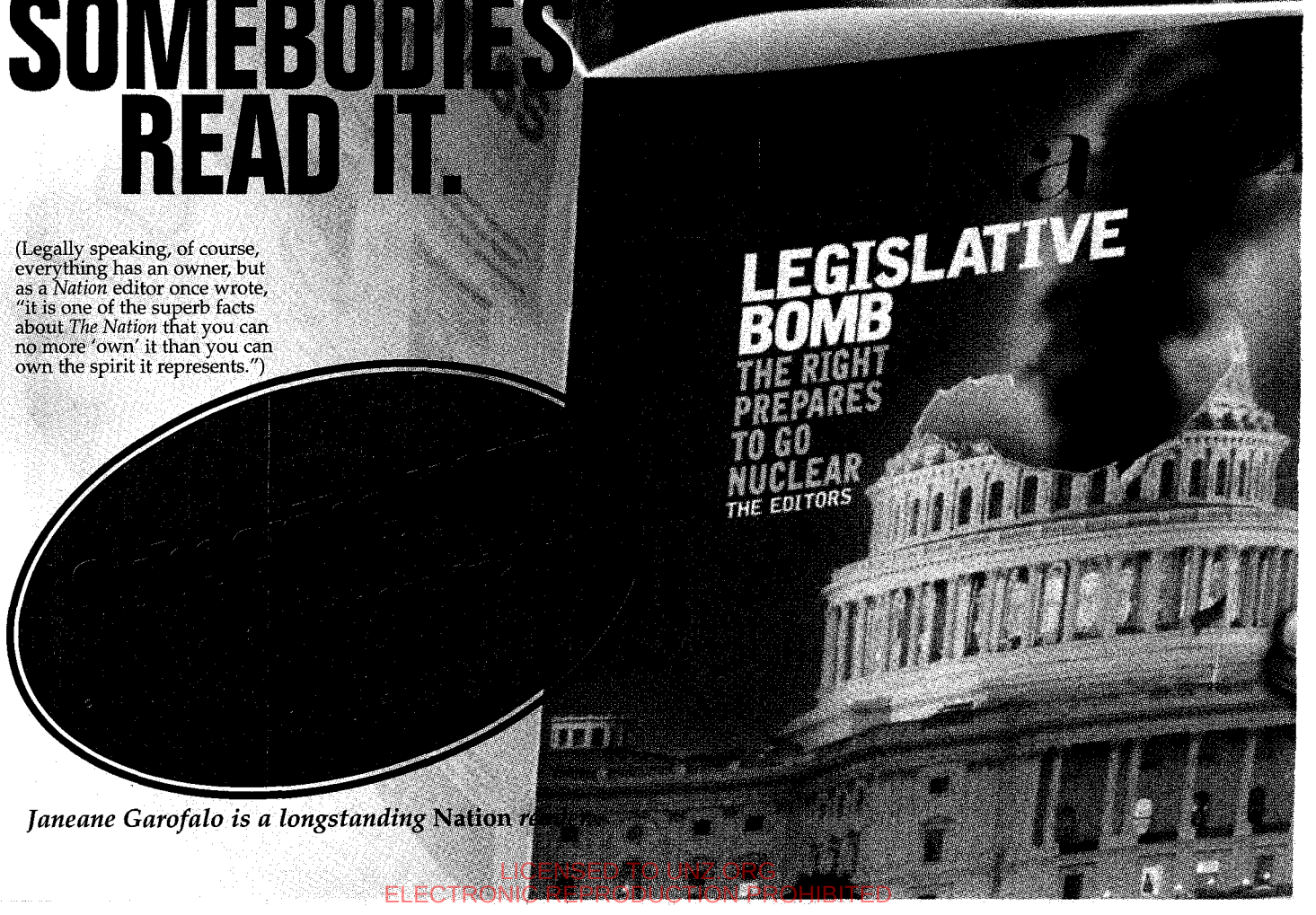

Janeane Garofalo is a longstanding Nation *re*

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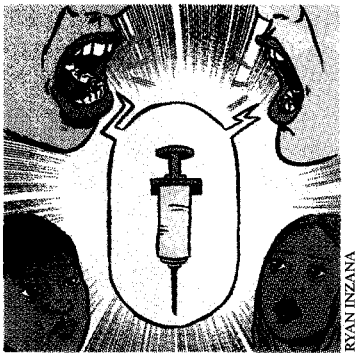
HOW A MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGH FOR WOMEN SET OFF A POLITICAL FIRESTORM.

Who's Afraid of Gardasil?

KAREN HOUPPERT

The HPV vaccine story has gotten all tangled up.

As recently as June 8, 2006, public health advocates, progressives and many parents were celebrating a huge victory: The Food and Drug Administration had approved Merck's new vaccine Gardasil, a shot series that would help protect girls from cervical cancer and genital warts. To their continuing delight, the Centers for Disease Control's immunization committee recommended less than a month later that the shots immediately be given to all females between the ages of 9 and 26. The committee acted on persuasive data indicating that the vaccine, which prevents the sexually transmitted human papillomavirus (HPV), works best before girls are sexually active.



RYAN INZANA

Human papillomavirus is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the world, and most women have had it—80 percent of US women, by the CDC's estimates. Often it goes away on its own, without its carrier's awareness. But each year hundreds of thousands of women and girls in the United States develop persistent infections from it, more than 10,000 get cervical cancer and 3,700 die from the cancer.

Gardasil, given in a series of three shots, protects against four strains of HPV. Two of those strains cause 70 percent of the nation's cervical cancer cases, and two of them cause 90 percent of genital warts. This new vaccine, widely given, has the potential to make cervical cancer almost obsolete here.

All good news, right?

Apparently not.

Today, as thirty-one state legislatures consider mandating the vaccine for middle school girls, skepticism about the wisdom of embarking on this swift and widespread inoculation program has bubbled up from critics who span the political spectrum. These strange bedfellows include Christian conservatives and their abstinence-only ilk, who have long argued that safe sex encourages profligate sex; a slew of Big Pharma critics, who see how Merck (which stands to make $4 billion a year on the vaccine by most estimates) is angling to corner this huge new vaccine market; the growing antivaccine movement, which objects to all such school-entry requirements; the parental-rights folks with a libertarian strain, who bridle at any mandates regarding their children's health; and a smattering of women's health advocates, who worry that the pace of the vaccine's introduction is jeopardizing its ultimate success.

What's all the noise about?

Some of it is predictable and comes from the usual quarters. Cultural conservatives and abstinence-only hardliners have been trotting out familiar arguments: Safe sex leads to more sex, they insist. Conservative California State Senator George Runner told the *Los Angeles Times* recently that he objected to this immunization because the disease was a result of lifestyle decisions, as opposed to contagion. He wondered: "Is there a more productive way for us to spend the money that may help someone who's in a health situation that has nothing to do with their personal choices? Where do you want to focus your resources?" Conveniently avoiding any logical extension of his argument to lifestyle decisions like, say, smoking, Runner and his allies insist Americans have to distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving ill.

The face of the undeserving ill, according to the moral conservatives, belongs to Illinois State Senator Debbie Halvorson, who, as co-sponsor of a bill to require the vaccine in her state, admitted that she herself had HPV and underwent a hysterectomy because of precancerous cells. Pro-abstinence bloggers and columnists see this as permission to grill her regarding her sexual history: "You would think she'd focus on her behavior that caused her to contract that sexually transmitted disease," Jill Stanek wrote in the online *Illinois Review*. "Halvorson could discuss the number of sex partners she has had in her lifetime and how each one increased the likelihood of contracting HPV...whether it was her husband who passed HPV on to her after sleeping with other women...[or] if Halvorson contracted HPV through rape, she could discuss ways to avoid rape."

Enter, stage left, anticorporate muckrakers and consumer rights activists. These players fret about the role Merck has played in peddling this drug and are wisely skeptical of a pharmaceutical industry with a track record for putting profits before safety.

A couple of things set off alarm bells. First, what was the pro-abstinence Republican Governor of Texas, Rick Perry, doing fast-tracking this vaccine by issuing an executive order that would make the shots compulsory for all sixth grade girls? This made everyone sit up and say, hmmm. (His conservative constituents expressed their befuddlement by screaming bloody murder. Perry did his best to mollify them in a linguistic high-wire act that laced the language of abortion foes with reproductive rights rhetoric: "While I understand the concerns expressed by some, I stand firmly on the side of protecting life. The HPV vaccine does not promote sex, it protects women's health.")

But that was only the beginning of Perry's problems—and by extension the problems many state politicians were having as they tried to get the vaccine mandated. The press discovered Perry's ties to Merck: Not only did his former chief of staff now

Karen Houppert, a freelance journalist living in Baltimore, is the author of Home Fires Burning: Married to the Military—For Better or Worse *(Ballantine).*

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work as a lobbyist for Merck but the Governor had accepted $6,000 in campaign contributions from Merck's political action committee. It didn't look good.

And it got worse.

A nonprofit called Women in Government, comprising female state legislators, has been behind the push to make the vaccine compulsory, educating members about its value and urging them to introduce bills in their respective states requiring the shots—even going so far as to offer sample wording for the legislation on its website. It turns out Merck—whoops!—was a big WIG donor.

Fueling everybody's mistrust was Merck's own image problems. As maker of the arthritis drug Vioxx, which may have been responsible for 28,000 deaths before it was withdrawn from the market in September 2004, Merck was, well, suspect. Especially since it stands to make a bundle by charging $360 for each shot series. And it has a motive to corner the market quickly: GlaxoSmithKline is hot on its heels with an HPV vaccine of its own that it hopes to introduce before the end of the year. What's more, if it's lucky Merck stands to double its money. When seeking approval for the vaccine, the company also submitted data on clinical trials for Gardasil and boys. Though the vaccine thus far appears safe for young men, it may be more complicated to prove it effective—and to sell to parents. (After all, the cancer-preventing imperative is more circuitous: Boys aren't the ones being protected from cancer; their future partners are.)

Antivaccine groups assailed the HPV shots and, with their network of skeptics already in place, served them up as experts to reporters.

In an effort to defuse the controversy, Merck backed off a bit in late February, issuing a statement saying, "We are pleased that Gardasil has been so widely embraced and do not want any misperception about Merck's role to distract from the ultimate goal of fighting cervical cancer, so Merck has re-evaluated its approach at the state level and we will not lobby for school requirements for Gardasil."

Enter the antivaccine groups, which had been waiting in the wings for the big break that finally arrived with Merck's public whipping. These groups, an eclectic mix of alternative medicine proponents, conspiracy theorists and libertarians, form a growing contingent of parents who are refusing to vaccinate their children against any diseases. They have assailed the HPV shots and, because their network of skeptics was already in place, were able to serve up outspoken critics on the spot to eager reporters. "Our concern is that this vaccine has not been studied long enough, or in enough children, to start mandating its use," said Barbara Loe Fisher, who heads the National Vaccine Information Center, a self-described organization of "parents of vaccine-injured children." This group, which according to its website pretty much opposes every vaccine mandate for every reason it can muster, strongly objects to this one being a requirement of school entry for sixth graders. "This is particularly egregious because HPV is not a disease communicated in a school setting like other diseases with mandatory vaccines," Fisher says, insisting (nonsensically) that this negates the government's "compelling interest" in curtailing HPV.

Those who work in public health were not blindsided by these critiques from the antivaccine organizations—and in fact have been worriedly monitoring the swelling ranks of vaccine opponents for several years now. "Vaccines have raised concerns for similar reasons throughout history," says Greg Zimet, a professor of pediatrics and clinical psychology at Indiana University School of Medicine who served on the Society of Adolescent Medicine's HPV committee. (The society strongly endorses the vaccine and is confident of its efficacy and safety but has not yet formally weighed in on the mandating issue.) When you consider that only a century ago infant mortality in the United States was 20 percent and another 20 percent of kids died before the age of 5, according to a 2005 article in the journal *Health Affairs*, the critical role that compulsory vaccination plays is clear; the infant mortality rate today is less than 1 percent. "But vaccines are their own worst enemy," Zimet says. "When they work, they reduce the element of risk to almost negligible. Who knows anyone who has ever had diphtheria or polio today? Take the deadly diseases so far out of the equation, and these parents will focus on what the vaccine's side effects may be."

Pointing out that as many as 3 percent of US children are no longer being vaccinated against any disease because their parents object (a number that jumps as high as 20 percent in some school communities), Zimet says public health officials and pediatricians worry that the positive effects of what they call "herd immunity" are already being compromised. Because there is a class of people for whom inoculation poses a health risk—those with AIDS or a host of other illnesses, for example—requiring that everyone else be vaccinated can help protect these populations as well. That's how the government justifies mandating immunization.

But, like many of the rifts that divide our civic conversations into opposing camps, the vaccine debate pits individual rights against group rights—and some parents are hopping mad. It's here that Fisher's antivaccine group marches in lockstep with antigovernment libertarians. Both insist that making the HPV vaccine compulsory violates their parental rights. "We are not against vaccine availability, just vaccine mandates," says Fisher. While she concedes that every state but two has some kind of opt-out clause for parents who object to the vaccine for health, religious, moral or ethical reasons, she says parents who refuse immunization are harassed. "Your name goes on a state list. You get harassing calls from the CDC for your views on vaccines. Some families get thrown off health insurance plans, thrown out of their pediatricians' offices, thrown out of public schools—or parents are put in a room and grilled by officials about the depth of their religious convictions on this."

Finally, the backdrop to all these conversations is one unfurled by women's health advocates, who insist that we set the current action in a historical context. Walking around with the DES-Thalidomide-Dalkon Shield pharmaceutical disasters in the back of their minds, some worry that Merck's profit-driven rush to mandate this drug may prove problematic. "There's merit to questioning industry's motives in this case," says Heather

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Boonstra, public policy analyst at the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a nonprofit organization focused on sexual health research and analysis. "Because Merck itself has pushed so hard to make the vaccine mandatory, there's a bit of skepticism about industry's motives."

Even those who would be expected to be chomping at the bit to promote this vaccine are holding back. "We haven't taken an official position on mandating the vaccine," says Amy Allina, program director for the National Women's Health Network. Though she acknowledges that "the data look excellent so far," she wavers, arguing with herself even as she speaks: "If you mandate the vaccine, this is how you get access for those with barriers to care—and if it's not mandated it's going to be much harder for many girls to get the vaccine. On the other hand, it's early to require this for such a huge population."

Almost all the major health organizations (American Academy of Pediatrics, the Society for Adolescent Medicine, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Institute for Vaccine Safety, the CDC, etc.), whatever they think about the aggressive push to require the vaccine immediately, are strongly recommending that girls be inoculated and are confident the vaccine poses no dangers. "This is a remarkably safe vaccine," says Dr. Neal Halsey, a professor in the department of International Health and Pediatrics at Johns Hopkins's Bloomberg School of Public Health, director of the Institute of Vaccine Safety and chair of the vaccine group at the Infectious Diseases Society of America. "There is no evidence of any increased risk of serious adverse events."

Leaving the shots voluntary means some girls will get them, but a lot won't. And those who won't are those who can't afford them.

What worries him are logistics. "I think it's premature to require this for school entry, because we don't have good systems in place to make sure we can deliver this to all girls," he says. "We need to make sure the supply can be maintained, and we need to make sure we have good mechanisms in place to get this shot to all those who need it." According to Halsey, we do a great job of getting babies and little kids immunized in this country because well-baby visits insure regular contact with doctors and because the government has a system in place to make sure all young children—even those without insurance—can get the required shots free. "But we are doing a terrible job delivering vaccines to adolescents, due to a lack of infrastructure at the CDC and state health departments," he says. He worries that rushing school immunization requirements for the HPV vaccine will just overwhelm an already stretched system. "We're pushing too early, too fast." This troubles him: "It is a very valuable, very useful vaccine—our first for cancer—so let's do it right."

One of the biggest obstacles to the vaccine, even strong advocates acknowledge, is the swiftness with which it is being mandated. There hasn't been enough time to educate parents properly, and that has led Americans to react with all the nuttiness that any whiff of teen sexuality evokes—despite the assiduous effort of promoters to frame it as a "cancer vaccine," downplaying the issue of sexual transmission and never, ever emphasizing the vaccine's role in reducing genital warts. "When you educate parents, research shows, the numbers who say they are likely to give the vaccine to their kids shoot up," says Deborah Arrindell, vice president of health policy at the American Social Health Association. She cites a 2004 study published in the *Journal of Lower Genital Tract Disease*: Among 575 parents, only 55 percent thought the vaccine was a good idea before they read a one-page educational fact sheet about HPV. Seventy-three percent of them favored the vaccine after learning more about it. "If we had just a little more time, we would have a lot less controversy."

Even so, Arrindell still thinks it is vital to mandate the shots. That's because leaving the shots voluntary means some girls will get them, but a lot won't. And those who won't get the shots are those who can't afford them. Mandating the vaccine makes it much more likely that insurers will cover the costs, that Medicaid will pay and that federally funded vaccine programs will quickly offer free vaccines for uninsured children.

All the experts agree on one thing: Any serious effort to address cervical cancer and genital warts has to target these populations. After all, these are the communities hardest hit. According to the Guttmacher Institute, African-American and Latina women are 1.5 times more likely to develop the cancer and are more likely to die of the disease as well. The explanation for this discrepancy is easy: More than half of those who develop cervical cancer in this country haven't had a pap smear in the previous three years, and these are disproportionately low-income and women of color who lack access to healthcare, Guttmacher reports.

"Unfortunately, there is a lot of distrust of the health community and their history of clinical trials among African-Americans," says Arrindell. For example, the *Washington Afro-American*, a local paper in DC and Baltimore, came out firmly against the vaccine in an editorial invoking the Tuskegee experiment and other efforts to restrict the reproductive rights of blacks, proclaiming that the government should "stop trying to shove it down our throats." Running with the piece was a cartoon featuring a young girl cowering from a huge syringe wielded by Uncle Sam in a Merck lab coat. "I'm really concerned that this controversy over the vaccine is causing the African-American community to shy away from a vaccine that can save women's lives," says Arrindell.

She says there are valuable lessons here. "Middle school may be the last public health gate we all walk through together, before kids begin dropping out of schools or get a crummy job without health insurance, or enter the workforce in general with its fragmented healthcare system."

"We should not get lost in the controversy over this," insists Arrindell, who would rather see a debate over the best ways of making this vaccine affordable and accessible—both to American girls and to those in developing countries who may never get the regular pap smears they need for early detection of cervical cancer. "This is the best public health news we've had for women in fifty years. It's huge. It's exciting. It's wonderful." She delivers a succinct epilogue: "It's a good thing." ■

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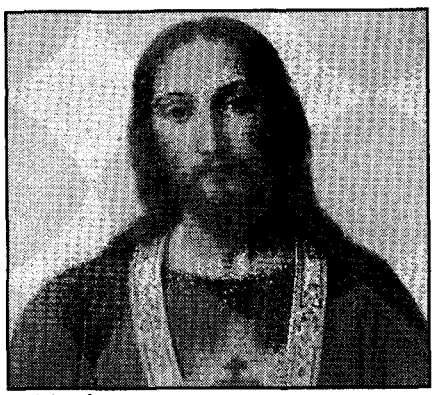

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Depiction of Jesus

About Your Professor

Dr. Bart D. Ehrman is the James A. Gray Professor and Chair of the Department of Religion at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The author or editor of 12 books, he has received many awards and prizes during his tenure at UNC including the Bowman and Gordon Gray Award for excellence in teaching.

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IN AN EFFORT TO EXCLUDE DUBIOUS EXPERTS, JUDGES HAVE ASSUMED TOO MUCH POWER.

Putting Science in the Dock

BARRY YEOMAN

On a chilly morning in November 2001, David Healy stood in a witness box in Kansas City, Kansas, and received a sobering lesson on the US legal system. A professor of psychological medicine at Cardiff University in Wales, Healy was an expert on serotonin, depression and the brain. He had served as secretary of the British Association for Psychopharmacology. Drug companies sought his advice. He was widely published in scientific journals.

RYAN INZANA

Healy had crossed the Atlantic to testify in a lawsuit filed against the pharmaceutical firm Pfizer by the parents of a teenager who had hanged himself in his bedroom closet. Thirteen-year-old Matthew Miller had just started taking Zoloft, a drug that can ease depression by boosting serotonin levels in the brain. But the medication seemed to backfire. During his week on Zoloft, Matthew grew "more agitated than I had ever seen him," his mother, Cheryl Miller, later recalled. She and her husband, Mark, believed their son's suicide was a direct and gruesome side effect of the drug.

The Millers knew that psychiatrists had seen violent suicidal behavior in a handful of patients taking selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) like Zoloft. They invited Healy to testify about this rare phenomenon. Though he routinely prescribed SSRIs in his own practice, Healy had become increasingly outspoken about the dangers of these antidepressants. He believed the evidence showed that the drug could be largely blamed for Matthew's suicide.

Before the trial could begin, though, Pfizer used a tactic that has grown increasingly common in lawsuits involving scientific testimony: It filed a thirty-six-page challenge to block Healy from even appearing before a jury. "Dr. Healy's reports consist of personal beliefs, speculation, innuendo, unscientific claims and theories, and mere musings," Pfizer's lawyers argued. "He has avoided, rather than followed, scientific methods in this case.... He knew what he was hired to say and, without bothering to explore the facts, said it."

Pfizer's challenge triggered a "Daubert hearing," a procedure judges use to evaluate the credentials of scientific witnesses and the quality of their work. Now, in the half-empty courtroom, Healy found his research ripped apart.

Pfizer attorney Malcolm Wheeler read a statement by Healy that antidepressants can produce side effects tormenting enough to drive suicidal patients over the edge. Then, unexpectedly, Wheeler changed the subject to pizza. "[What] if a person who is depressed eats a piece of pizza and gets a stomachache because it's greasy," Wheeler asked, "and he just said, 'That's the last straw; I'm going to commit suicide'?" Could the pizza be held responsible?

Healy was taken aback by the question. "I think, Mr. Wheeler, you're playing with the actual example slightly," he said in his understated way.

"I am indeed," Wheeler shot back.

It was a particularly stark unmeeting of the minds. But the encounter illustrates what often happens when science is called upon to settle questions of law.

People are exposed to risks all the time: They take medications, work around toxic chemicals, undergo risky surgeries, smoke cigarettes, use electronic devices that emit radiation. Sometimes they get sick or injured, either as a result of the exposure or simply by coincidence. It's the role of science to determine what caused the harm, and the role of law to determine who must take the blame.

In the past the courts asked scientists to play gatekeeper by deciding what was good science—permissible in the courtroom—and what wasn't. But 1993 brought a dramatic shift. The Supreme Court ruled in *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals* that scientists should not be the ultimate arbiters of the quality of science. That power should be reserved for judges.

The decision brought the two disciplines into ugly conflict. Since *Daubert*, respected researchers have seen their legitimacy questioned, even rejected, by judges who may never have taken a college biology course. Cutting-edge science has been banished from courthouses. And juries, a fundamental element of the justice system, have been stripped of much of their power. "*Daubert* lets judges have much too much leeway to follow their personal inclinations," says Stanley Feldman, retired chief justice of the Arizona Supreme Court. "It's an interference in the jury process and wholly unneeded." Feldman says the 1993 ruling was written to address legitimate concerns about how science is used in courtrooms. But "the remedy," he says, "is worse than the problem."

As a result of *Daubert*, plaintiffs find it harder to collect damages for injuries and illnesses they might have suffered because of others' negligence. The result, say legal experts as well as scientists, is a system that has tilted further to the benefit of large corporations.

For most of the past century, judges had little direction about what type of science to admit into their courtrooms. They relied primarily on a terse 1923 federal court decision, called *Frye v. United States*, which allowed scientific testimony if the underlying principles had gained "general acceptance" within the field. If most researchers backed a theory, that meant it was permissible in court.

Then, in the 1980s and '90s, two developments shook US courtrooms. The first was a rise in "toxic torts"—lawsuits claiming that particular drugs or other chemicals had caused injuries. The science behind these cases was often complex, giving rise to

Barry Yeoman is a freelance journalist in Durham, North Carolina.

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concerns that jurors could be confused or even misled. "You had experts dueling over novel theories of causation," says Ed Imwinkelried, a law professor at the University of California, Davis.

The other development was the emerging movement to ban "junk science" from courtrooms, led by Peter Huber, a scholar with the conservative Manhattan Institute. "The legal establishment has adjusted rules of evidence," Huber wrote in his controversial 1991 book *Galileo's Revenge*, "so that almost any self-styled scientist, no matter how strange or iconoclastic his views, will be welcome to testify in court."

Galileo's Revenge was firmly in the legal zeitgeist when the Supreme Court took up the *Daubert* case, which involved the drug Bendectin and birth defects. In his ruling, Justice Harry Blackmun essentially overturned *Frye* and instructed judges to act as strict gatekeepers, favoring evidence that had undergone rigorous testing, carried acceptable error rates, survived peer review and won "widespread acceptance" in professional circles.

Blackmun acknowledged that these new criteria could exclude cutting-edge research, favoring instead a "stifling and repressive scientific orthodoxy." This, he said, was unavoidable. "Scientific conclusions are subject to perpetual revision," he wrote. "Law, on the other hand, must resolve disputes finally and quickly."

Daubert's tougher standard had an immediate impact, both in federal courts and in states that adopted the federal standard. "The Supreme Court said to judges, You have to look. You have to ask, Does this thing even pass the laugh test?" says David Venderbush, a New York attorney who has represented defendants in silicone-breast-implant litigation. At first, *Daubert* did weed out sloppy and unscientific claims. In one Florida case, a woman who gave birth to a daughter with several deformities sued the manufacturers of an acne cream she used while pregnant. Her only expert witness was a gynecologist with no expertise in embryology who could not cite a single study linking the medicine to birth defects.

But now rigorous science also gets thrown out. "There have been numerous examples where highly qualified scientists, sterling scientists, have been Dauberted out," says David Ozonoff, chair emeritus of Boston University's department of environmental health. That's because controversial lawsuits often turn on groundbreaking science—the type that attracts the best researchers and the type *Daubert* discourages.

The impact has been lopsided. "In retrospect, it's pretty clear that *Daubert* strengthened the role of defendants," says Joe Cecil, a senior researcher with the Federal Judicial Center in Washington, DC. Chemical and pharmaceutical firms often use *Daubert* to challenge scientific evidence provided by injured and sickened plaintiffs, who carry the burden of proof in a legal action. The defendant gets the first shot at mounting a *Daubert* challenge—and if it wins, the case is often dismissed through a process called summary judgment.

In March 2006, for example, Dow Chemical persuaded a federal judge to exclude the opinions of three scientists including renowned North Carolina toxicologist Ken Rudo, who had concluded that groundwater contamination at a Louisiana trailer park increased residents' risk of cancer. The case was then dismissed. This wasn't unusual: The RAND Institute for Civil Justice, in a 2002 analysis of 400 lawsuits, found a marked upswing in summary judgments following *Daubert*.

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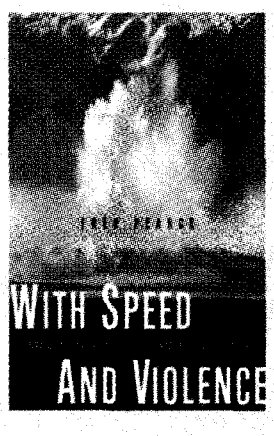

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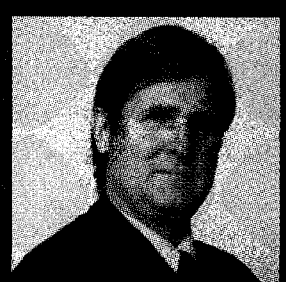
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An American Jewish Committee survey* reveals that two-thirds of American Jews now believe the Iraq War was a mistake. It is time to act.

We ask you to join in calling on our government to bring safely home—as many members of Congress have urged, on a six-month schedule—all American troops from Iraq. This Exodus should begin by Passover and be completed by 9/11.

For just as Passover celebrates freedom from ancient slavery and the Pharaoh's military mind-set, so today we seek freedom for both Americans and Iraqis from the death and destruction imposed by stubborn attachment to a destructive occupation. Our grief on 9/11 calls us to move beyond violence, not to escalat it. And upon the heels of 9/11 comes the wisdom c Rosh Hashanah and Ramadan, also calling us to Tur Toward Peace in our world as well as in our hearts.

Our representatives in Congress must:

1. Use their constitutional power of the purs to end this armed occupation. "The king shall n amass an armed cavalry nor multiply gold and silve Thus he will not act haughtily toward his fellov citizens." [Deuteronomy. 17: 16-20].

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Ask the UN, regional bodies, and non-governmental organizations to offer their services to help Iraqis peacefully resolve their future. "Justice, justice, shall you pursue." [Deut 16: 20. Tradition adds: Why "justice" twice? To achieve just ends, we must use just means.]

Commit fifty billion dollars—a mere one-tenth of what the war has already cost the US—to be spent for construction, under international supervision and by Iraqi decisions. "Do not harden your heart and shut your hand against the needy. Give to them readily and have no regrets when you do so." [Deut. 15: 8-10].

End the American addiction to oil that was one of the main causes for this war and threats of others, for corrupt bargains with some oil-rich governments, and for global scorching. Use conservation, renewable and sustainable energy sources, emission caps, a carbon tax, and other carbon-control measures to ensure that our children can achieve the Hanukkah standard: requiring only one day's oil to meet eight days' needs.

Tradition teaches: "Seek peace and pursue it" [Psalm 34:15] **means we must pursue peace even if it is running away from us. We expect no less of our government.**

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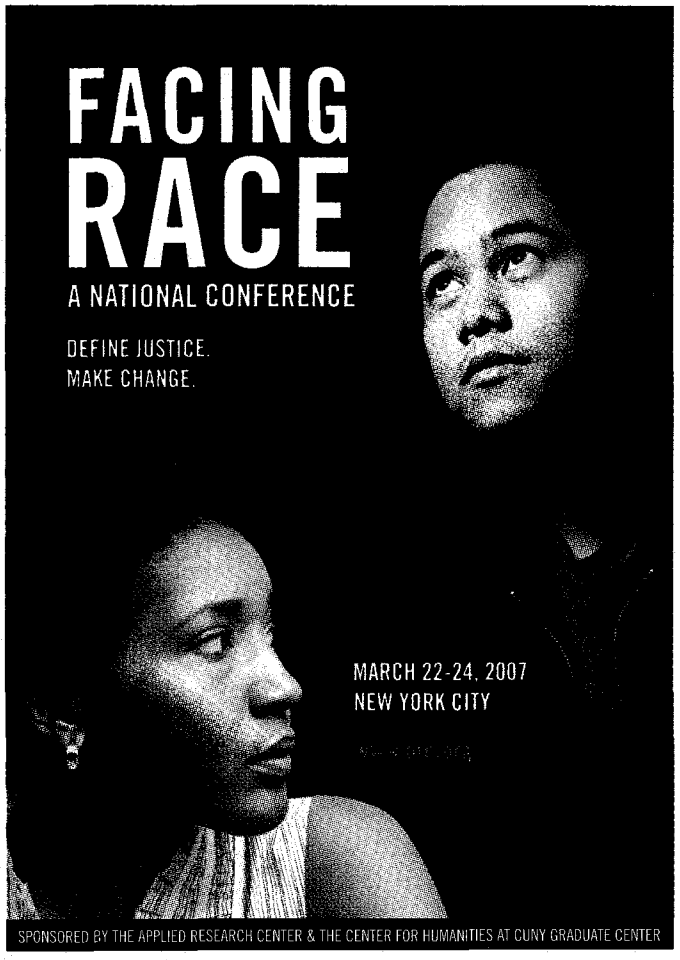

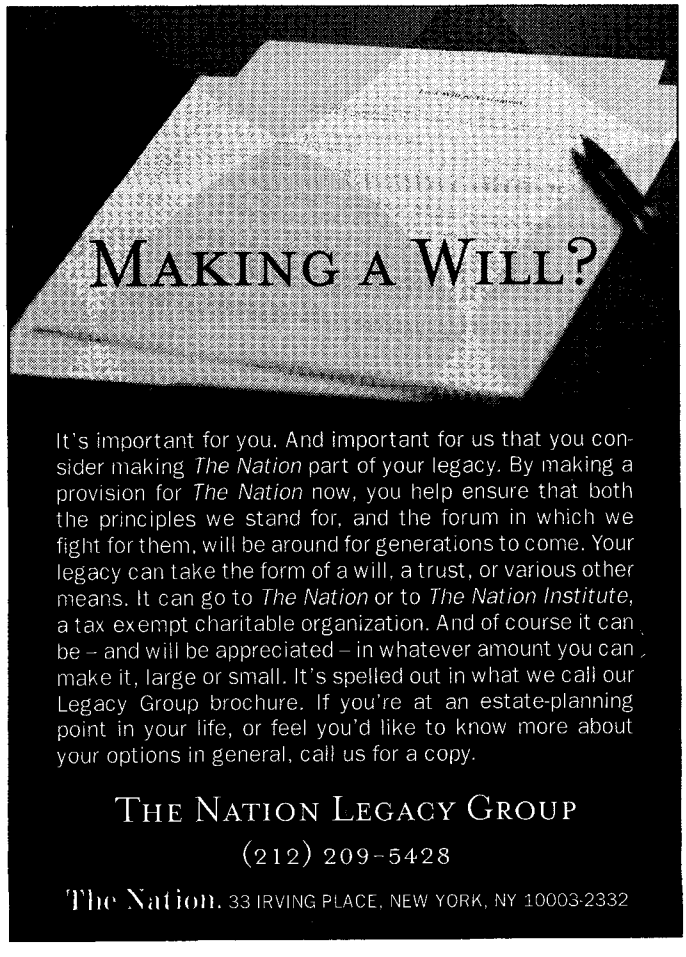
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In 96 percent of those judgments, the defense prevailed.

These odds have scared away some plaintiffs' attorneys from even filing lawsuits. "*Daubert* is now part of the gamesmanship of litigation, which makes things more expensive and has a great impact in terms of 'Is this case worth litigating?'" says Margaret Berger, a professor at Brooklyn Law School and the nation's leading *Daubert* scholar. "Undoubtedly, plaintiffs just do not go ahead with these cases because they can't afford the *Daubert* challenge." Berger fears that by insulating corporations, *Daubert* emboldens them to take risks with consumer safety and health. "If you put in too strict a standard, you take away the deterrent effect of tort law," she says.

Nineteen ninety-seven was a rough year for Matt Miller. The family had moved, and the boy had a big new middle school to adjust to. His grades had fallen and his teachers complained that he was acting out—head-butting his locker and urinating on the bathroom floor. That spring he told a teacher, "If my parents send me away to camp, I'll kill them and myself."

Many depressed people are suicidal. But Matt's parents were convinced that it was the medicine itself, not Matt's troubles, that pushed him over the edge. Few psychiatrists at the time believed that antidepressants triggered suicidal thoughts and acts, but even then there was evidence that the Millers might be right. For most of a decade, psychiatrists had observed uncharacteristic suicidal behavior among some SSRI users. "It's sudden and obsessive," says E. Jane Garland, a professor of psychiatry at the University of British Columbia. "It's not like someone was severely depressed and was thinking about killing themselves." In 1991, a year after the first case reports appeared in medical journals, Harvard psychiatrist Anthony Rothschild conducted a dramatic study: Three patients who had made serious suicide attempts while taking the SSRI Prozac were put back on the drug, under controlled conditions to guarantee their safety. Each of them again felt suicidal urges, accompanied by akathisia, a tormenting agitation described by Harvard psychiatrist Joseph Glenmullen as "living twenty-four hours a day with the sensation of nails scratching up and down a blackboard."

Why would a drug prevent suicide in some depressed people and potentiate it in others? One hypothesis holds that SSRIs restore a person's vigor before wiping away the depression. Perhaps patients regain the energy to kill themselves before the medicine eases their intense sadness. What's more, SSRIs upset the overall balance of chemicals in the brain, says Harvard's Glenmullen. To compensate for the serotonin boost, the level of dopamine—serotonin's chemical partner—plummets. "Whenever the drugs step on the chemical gas pedal, the brain tries to slam on the brakes," Glenmullen writes in his book *Prozac Backlash*. "The result is jerking, stop-and-go oscillations in brain activity that can go out of control." Dopamine suppression is associated with loss of motor control—hence the akathisia, which many researchers link directly to suicide.

The Millers knew that to win their lawsuit, a credible scientist would have to testify that SSRIs could have caused their son's death. Their attorney, Andy Vickery, approached Dr. Healy. The professor had already survived scrutiny in the American legal system: A federal judge in Hawaii had described Healy as "an experienced and well-qualified psychopharmacologist" whose

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opinions were admissible by *Daubert* standards.

As an expert witness, Healy used his access to Pfizer's clinical-trial data to reanalyze the company's results. He found that volunteers on Zoloft had twice the risk of suicide as those taking placebos.

The most alarming evidence, though, came from his own research. In an attempt to understand the varying effects of different antidepressants, Healy recruited twenty healthy, nondepressed volunteers, giving half of them Zoloft and the other half reboxetine, a drug that works on the brain chemical norepinephrine. After two weeks on the drug, and a two-week cleansing period, the volunteers switched medications. Healy asked the volunteers to keep diaries of their emotions, and interviewed them in detail afterward.

The first half of the study produced few surprises. But after the crossover, the experiment took a chilling turn: Two of the volunteers taking Zoloft suddenly became suicidal, though neither had suffered from depression. "I had this sudden feeling that the walls were turning green and pressing in," one of them, whom Healy calls Joanna to protect her privacy, remembers. "My mind had emptied out, and there was this tiny thought that grew until it filled my head: I had to go out and throw myself under a lorry. And I had to do it right now." Joanna was halfway out the door before a ringing telephone snapped her out of the delusion. Another woman, also on Zoloft, had recurring nighttime thoughts of hanging herself from a ceiling beam.

"We had veered away from the brink of disaster," Healy says. "Goodness only knows how we'd have handled it if anything had actually happened."

Not everyone was impressed with the findings, which were published in the peer-reviewed journal *Primary Care Psychiatry*. Pfizer called the study "rife with design flaws and methodological flaws," noting that many of the participants knew Healy personally and might have been biased by his opinions. Others, though, found the experiment compelling. "Healthy-volunteer studies take depression out of the equation," says University of Nevada professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences David Antonuccio. "They make it impossible to blame the disease." Although Healy's study was small, his exit interviews elicited far more information about the drugs' side effects than most studies provide. "Science starts with careful observation," Glenmullen says. "And David's study provided rich observation."

Pfizer's attorneys never offered a definitive explanation for Matt Miller's death. The drugmaker does say that when someone on antidepressants commits suicide, the most plausible culprit is the underlying depression. Alternately, Pfizer has suggested that Matt's hanging was accidental, the product of a botched act of sexual self-gratification. Mostly, though, the company tried to win the Miller case by undermining Healy's credibility. "Healy was taking positions for which he provided no quantitative analysis," says Wheeler, the Pfizer attorney.

To help evaluate Healy's research, US District Court Judge Kathryn Vratil appointed two independent experts, Yale epidemiologist John Concato and University of Illinois psychiatrist John Davis, to answer her questions. "I had envisioned a free-wheeling scientist-to-scientist dialogue," says Vickery, the Millers' attorney. Vratil, an appointee of the first President Bush, had

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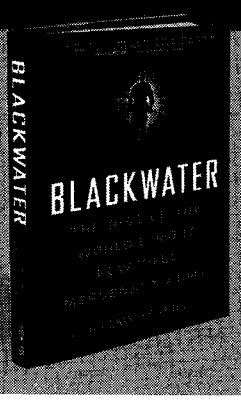

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other ideas: To avoid any appearance of bias, she barred the experts from talking with Healy or any other witness as they prepared their findings.

In their report, the two men called Healy an "accomplished investigator." But they also said Healy's methodology "has not been accepted in the relevant scientific community" and that the psychopharmacologist holds a "minority view" about SSRIs and suicidality. Agencies like the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), they noted, had found no such relationship.

If the experts' report was measured and sober, the *Daubert* hearing was fragmented and contentious. Attorneys from both sides peppered the two independent experts with highly focused questions—normal in court, but not how scientists usually converse. "They were asking very specific questions about very isolated details," recalls Concato. "I was feeling like they were not letting me address the big picture."

Healy took the witness stand on the second day. After the pizza dialogue, Wheeler turned his attention to Joanna, the volunteer who fantasized about throwing herself under a truck. "Her father was an alcoholic, correct?" he asked.

"Yes," Healy replied.

"And she drank two pints per week." Indirectly, the attorney was trying to dismiss her bizarre suicidal urge, and thereby downplay Healy's findings.

"You realize that is an extraordinarily low amount of alcohol," Healy shot back. Sparring like this was foreign to the psychopharmacologist. "The scientific process is not adversarial," Healy says. "It isn't about trying to trip people up into making a mistake. It's about trying to see whether you can achieve a certain amount of consensus."

Watching from the sidelines, John Davis found himself sympathizing with the researcher he had earlier criticized. "The Pfizer attorney nitpicked about trivial things," Davis says. "If there are minor mistakes here or there, that supports the credibility of the study. I'd be more suspicious of perfect data." That's the problem of the adversarial system, Davis adds: "These attorneys try to discredit every little thing, and you end up with trivia."

In February 2002, Judge Vratil issued her key rulings in *Miller v. Pfizer*. "Dr. Healy is an accomplished researcher," she wrote, "and his credentials are not in dispute." But his belief in the SSRI-suicide link is a "distinctly minority view," she added, and the flaws in his methodology "are glaring, overwhelming, and unexplained." With that, Vratil rejected Healy as an expert witness—and dismissed the lawsuit against Pfizer. The Millers appealed all the way to the Supreme Court, which in October 2004 rejected their petition for a hearing.

Meanwhile, psychopharmacology was catching up. That same month, the FDA ordered all antidepressants—SSRIs and others—to carry a "black box warning" alerting parents to dangers the medications posed to their youngsters. At the agency's request, a panel of psychiatric experts had re-examined two dozen pediatric clinical trials—and found that children and adolescents who take antidepressants experience suicidal thinking and behavior twice as often as those who take placebos. The episodes cited were "distressing," says Robert Temple, associate director for medical policy at the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. "It really looked like the child in question was trying to kill himself or herself. The gesture was not just a silly powder-puff gesture. It was real."

That was just the beginning. In April 2006 the drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline disclosed that adults with major depression were almost seven times more likely to attempt suicide after taking the SSRI Paxil than after taking a placebo, although these events were rare. In November an FDA analysis of 372 clinical trials, involving almost 100,000 patients, revealed a twofold risk of suicidal behavior for adults under 25 who took SSRIs. To those who share David Healy's views, the latest research is an affirmation—too late for the Millers but perhaps early enough to avert future tragedies. "I believe it vindicates Healy in a major way," says Antonuccio, the Nevada professor. "Here mainstream scientists are saying, Yes, these antidepressants cause suicidality—which is what Healy has been saying all along."

Healy's vindication doesn't fix the legal system, though. Prominent scientists continue to have their opinions dismissed by jurists whose degrees are in law, not biology or chemistry. Last May, for example, a Mississippi state judge reversed a $2 million jury award to a retired mechanic with non-Hodgkins lymphoma after retroactively striking the testimony of epidemiologist Barry Levy. A former president of the American Public Health Association, Levy relied on multiple lines of evidence to conclude that the mechanic's cancer stemmed from his long-term use of Liquid Wrench, a solvent that once contained benzene. "I didn't have a problem with his being a qualified epidemiologist," Circuit Court Judge Robert Evans says of Levy. "You just have to look at his résumé," which includes appointments at Harvard and Tufts. Nonetheless, after reading memos filed by defendants Radiator Specialty Co. and US Steel, the judge concluded that Levy had misinterpreted the scientific literature. "Dr. Levy's opinions failed to meet *Daubert* muster," he wrote in his decision.

What's the solution to overzealous judges who exclude reputable scientists? Even some *Daubert* supporters acknowledge that Justice Blackmun's criteria need adjustment to reflect the complexities of twenty-first-century science. "It may be that the standards are a little bit one-size-fits-all," says R. Collin Mangrum, a law professor at Creighton University. "As science and technology become more complicated, we need to refine *Daubert* to make it more sensitive to admitting the right stuff and excluding the right stuff." But Brooklyn Law School's Margaret Berger says that simply adopting new standards wouldn't go far enough: "These cases are modeled on horse-and-buggy accidents," she says. Instead, she argues, the legal system must take a more in-depth look at some of the underlying issues: Has enough research been done on the health consequences of our biggest toxic threats? How is that research disseminated? And who has access to it? "The problems are much more fundamental than *Daubert*," she says.

Until significant changes take place, say *Daubert* critics, the system will continue to harm more than scientists' reputations—it will also harm ill and injured Americans. "We do need tools to make sure that bad science doesn't get to court," says David Michaels, a George Washington University epidemiologist who served as an assistant energy secretary during the Clinton Administration. "But *Daubert* is an imprecise tool, and its application has resulted in miscarriages of justice." ■

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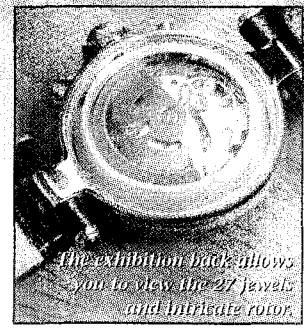
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COMMENT
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 8)

for paramilitary ties, including Senator Álvaro Araújo, the brother of Uribe's Foreign Minister, María Consuelo, provoking her resignation February 19. A warrant for the capture of their father, Álvaro Araújo Noguera, was issued March 2; meanwhile, former security and intelligence head Jorge Noguera, a campaign chief for Uribe in 2002, was arrested for arranging the assassination of union leaders and academics by paramilitaries.

The unraveling confirms what has long been an open secret: The Colombian government is rife with paramilitary influence. "What we are discovering here is not just a series of meetings between politicians and criminals," Senator Gustavo Petro of the leftist Polo Democrático told Congress November 30. "What we are discovering, before the eyes of all citizens, is the building of a mafioso regime in Colombia."

The Bush Administration has been largely mute about the mounting *parapolitica* scandal. But with the advent of a Democratic-led Congress and the State Department requesting a new round of funding for Latin America, the upheaval in Colombia may become impossible to ignore. For the first time since the passage of Plan Colombia—the Clinton-era drug-eradication package that under Bush became a $4.7 billion boon for the Colombian military and American corporations outfitting the drug war—Democrats head key committees that under Republican control have funneled US dollars to Bogotá.

Politically, Plan Colombia has benefited from the seamless merging of "war on drugs" rhetoric with that of the "war on terror." "When it comes to Colombia," Democratic Congressman Jim McGovern says, "the Bush Administration says two things: One, we're fighting terrorists, and two, we're protecting our kids from drugs. Facts don't matter. And anyone who disagrees is 'soft on terror.'"

The events of 2006 alone (labeled the "black year" by the Colombian press) make an overwhelming case for rethinking aid to Colombia. A low point came last fall, in a scandal that spoke volumes about what Uribe's US-funded "democratic security" state has wrought. After a spate of attempted—and seemingly coordinated—terrorist attacks in the weeks surrounding Uribe's re-inauguration last summer, the daily *El Tiempo* broke the story: Of seven bombs discovered by the military, "at least four" were planted by hired hands of the very officers who were later credited with deactivating them. This included a July 31 attack that injured nineteen soldiers and killed a civilian.

At the root of this scandal lies the military's relentless pursuit of *positivos* (literally, "positives"). Central to Uribe's results-oriented doctrine of *seguridad democrática*, *positivos* are the successful missions—often measured in guerrilla corpses—that yield money and professional advancement for those involved. Recently, *positivos* have led to some gross displays of military pageantry, like a staged "rescue" operation last summer in which six innocent "kidnappers" were murdered and then dressed as FARC guerrillas. In January Col. Hernán Mejía, one of the most decorated officers, was revealed to have collaborated with the notorious AUC leader "Jorge 40" in staging similar slaughters.

Thus far, Uribe seems strangely immune to the scandals that have riddled his tenure in office. "Many people believe so completely in what Uribe says that all he needs to do is make a public declaration and they'll go back to their routines," Bogotá-based activist Angela Cerón says. But as Uribe's allies become indistinguishable from the paras that dominate Colombia's conflict, his legacy will be inextricable from a military's whose actions last summer seem all too logical—and consistent—in a society governed by a war too profitable to end. LILIANA SEGURA

Liliana Segura, a freelance writer, is program associate at The Nation Institute.

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

fication for eating meat, Lazare dismisses vegetarians as a frivolous group who spend their lives "wallowing in the silly defeatism of a diet of tofu and sprouts." Sigh.

Rather than wasting precious energy trying to refute these arguments, I will say, simply, that I am at peace with my decision. I acknowledge that there are contradictions, but I stand by my choice. I will live, quite happily, as a vegetarian for the rest of my life. Where's the "silly defeatism" in that? THERESA M. WELFORD

LAZARE REPLIES

New York City

■ Of the scores of outraged letters I received in response to my article, this one, believe it or not, is one of the least insulting. For the record, I did not argue against vegetarianism. I merely pointed out that the justifications vegetarians have served up over the years do not hold up under scrutiny. Theresa Welford acknowledges that her position is contradictory, which is another way of saying it doesn't make sense. But I am glad she's found peace. DANIEL LAZARE

HELLO, NICHOLS? GET ME REWRITE!

Watsonville, Calif.

■ Thanks for John Nichols's excellent "Newspapers... and After?" [Jan. 29] on the "demise or not" of newspapers. As someone who digests every page of two newspapers daily, I wholeheartedly agree. Television news and computer blogs have become a national phenom, but newspapers still survive. Have any of these anti-papers people tried to line their birdcage with a TV or a blog? DOUG MCKINNEY

Los Angeles

■ Your cover illustration showing Clark Kent, Lois Lane and another staffer reacting to being laid off from the *Daily Planet* is reminiscent of the story "The End of *The Planet*" in Superman Comics #79 (November/December 1952), in which a mobster buys the *Daily Planet* in order to shut it down. Of course Superman saved the day then, but now, more than half a century later, even the Man of Steel may have met his match. The Internet may have made newspapers obsolete.

Like the telegraph, newspapers are essentially a nineteenth-century technology that happened to play a strong role in the twentieth century as well. But now, in an age when information flows freely online, they may belong in museums. Yes, I will likely be saddened by the end of the *Los Angeles Times*—just as some of my forebears were sad to see the end of home ice delivery and interurban trolleys—but civilization changes, and we just go along for the ride—even as we do the things that drive those changes. DENNIS ANTHONY

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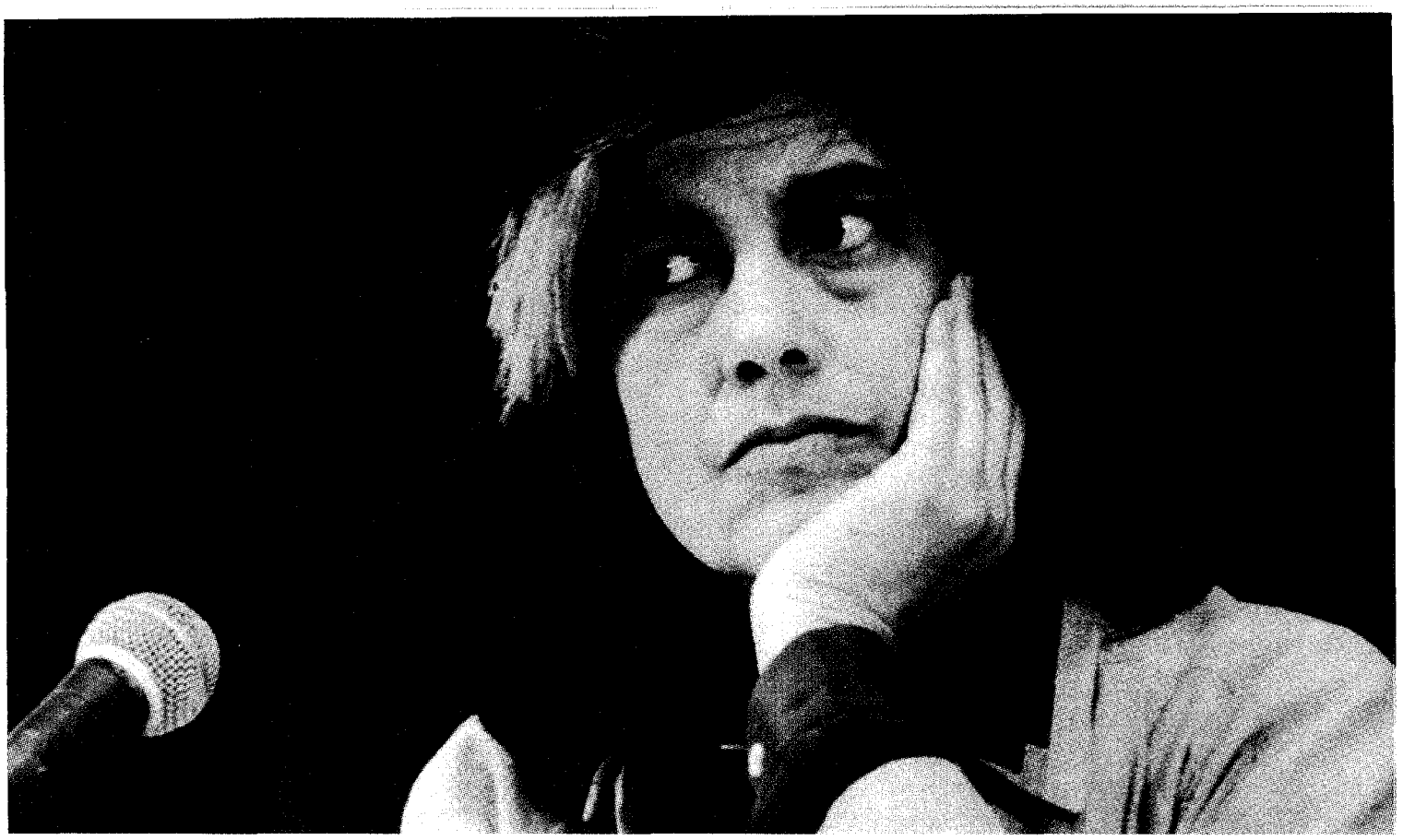

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The Restless Mind

JEREMY HARDING

AT THE SAME TIME: Essays and Speeches.
By Susan Sontag.
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 235 pp. $23.

You'd expect a compilation of essays and speeches put together after Susan Sontag's death to have its dreary moments. Of course, she won her share of prizes and addressed plenty of audiences. She was also a restless figure who liked to keep signaling her position, wherever it happened to be. Yet her approach was fiercely economical, and this collection, which she was working on at the time of her death, is as succinct and absorbing as any of her books, even if a lot of its content is familiar.

At the Same Time consists of five published essays, five prefaces and introductions, five addresses and one interview. Among the writers whose work Sontag introduced are Leonid Tsypkin, the Russian author of *Summer in Baden-Baden*; Halldór Laxness, the Icelandic Nobel winner; and Victor Serge, the heroic revolutionary born in Belgium. All three are revisited here. The stand-alone essays include "An Argument About Beauty," first published in *Daedalus*, and her controversial reaction to 9/11, published in *The New Yorker*. The lectures and speeches, the most discursive and in many ways the most rewarding of these pieces, give a strong sense of Sontag the celebrity, bedecked with ribbons and rosettes, on the hoof from one county fair to the next. Jerusalem, Frankfurt, Johannesburg, Cape Town. They also show how well she rose to public occasions and how insistently she felt those occasions should rise to her.

The title of the collection was taken from an address she gave in South Africa and chosen "as a tribute to the polyphonic quality of this book." Perhaps the editors, Paolo Dilonardo and Anne Jump, were worried that the choice of material is all over the place, or eager to assure us that Sontag doesn't drone on. It isn't and she doesn't. David Rieff, her son, is more confident.

In his affectionate foreword, Rieff regrets that his mother didn't finish her working life with a piece of fiction. She

Jeremy Harding is a contributing editor at The London Review of Books. *His most recent book is* Mother Country, *a memoir.*

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felt endlessly kept from writing novels and stories by an "evangelical incentive" that led her to devote much of her energy to meditating on the work of particular "gods"—which is how she describes Rilke, Pasternak and Tsvetayeva, for instance, in her introduction to an edition of their letters. Rieff adds that "the appropriateness of such worship was, for my mother, self-evident, and she practiced it until she could no longer practice anything at all."

Her politics and her need to go on record narrowed the gap for fiction still further. She was a passionate admirer of Serge, "a lifelong activist and agitator," and of his novels, which are steeped in politics and yet, as she says here, "much more than 'political novels.'" But her fiction would have seemed clumsy, instrumentalized and plainly dishonest if she'd imagined she could follow in his footsteps. In her case the work of the imagination required one sort of attention and politics another, and as Rieff says, she could not "wall herself off from her own extra-literary commitments, above all her political involvements from Vietnam to Iraq."

"Of course I have opinions, political opinions," she announced when she took the Jerusalem Prize in 2001. She gave two pointed examples: First, she was opposed to "the doctrine of collective responsibility, as a rationale for collective punishment"—she was thinking about the Palestinians—and second, she believed that for any hope of peace, the settlements in the occupied territories would have to be dismantled and the army withdrawn. "But do I hold these opinions as a writer?" she asked. "Or do I not hold them as a person of conscience and then use my position as a writer to add my voice to others saying the same thing?" In Sontag's judgment, it didn't do to be confused about this.

Whatever she may have felt about her output of fiction, she was scarcely unproductive. Four novels; a collection of spiky, amusing stories; a beautiful Noonday reprint of her AIDS story "The Way We Live Now" illustrated by British painter Howard Hodgkin; several plays and film scripts: All this is ample evidence of a vocation fulfilled. Meanwhile her readers have the incessant demands on her curiosity to thank for her other writing, no less memorable or successful: collections like this one, as well as the monographs on photography, illness and AIDS. Her inability to walk away from political and cultural controversy or refrain from thinking about writers who inspired her isn't something we should lament in deference to her feelings. She was, Rieff admits, a person who took herself awfully seriously, but her willingness to be distracted from the things she hoped to get on with shows how seriously she also took the world.

This gift for distraction was partly about her reluctance to cut off from the present. However thoroughly she could pitch herself into the past for an act of "worship" or a proselytizing piece like the one on Serge, she was always interested in what was going on around her. Wherever she is in her essays, in Leningrad in the 1920s, Paris in the 1930s or Tuscany in 1944, she returns sooner or later to the here and now—just to scan the horizon.

Sontag's willingness to be distracted from the writing projects she hoped to accomplish shows how seriously she also took the world.

"An Argument About Beauty," the first essay in this collection, is a good example. It presents the genealogy of an ideal in a concise series of steps, taking us from Renaissance notions of beauty (Shakespeare) to the elegiac Japanese tradition (the annual cherry-blossom viewing), on from there to early Modernism (Wilde and Gertrude Stein), back down to the Enlightenment (Kant and Lessing), only to return us to Modernism via Paul Valéry. From there we're brought smoothly forward into Sontag's present—her own time and place—to reflect on a set of values that have evolved for centuries but that are rapidly degrading, she believes, under the pressure of late capitalism in America.

Like an observer in a laboratory who sees her samples mutating, Sontag is gripped by the changes going on under her nose. The source of this rapid degradation, she concludes in "An Argument About Beauty," is the "discrediting" of judgment itself, an exercise no longer understood as "impartial or objective" but as "self-serving or self-referring." To speak of beauty is to presuppose ugliness, and "there are more and more taboos about calling something, anything, ugly." "Political correctness" must shoulder some of the blame, she thinks, but the prime culprit is the "ideology of consumerism." She urges readers to think about "the complicity between these two" in a cultural landscape where "good taste seems even more retrograde an idea than beauty" and "E-Z Art gives the green light to all." The essay ends a few pages on with a touching passage about the natural world, to which beauty always refers us eventually, she argues, deepening "our sense of the sheer spread and fullness of reality, inanimate as well as pulsing, that surrounds us all." This is an unusual tone for her to strike. It has something of the eighteenth-century sublime, something of the 1960s, but much more of the writer who's happy, just once, to exit Word, shut down the computer and leave the universe to see to itself while she's away from her desk.

Sontag was a snob by the standards that prevailed toward the end of her life. She liked rigor. She believed in judgment and taste and railed against demagogic words like "elitist" and evasive words like "interesting." (She objects in the essay on beauty to the way "discrimination" has come to signify "prejudice, bigotry, blindness to the virtues of what was not identical with oneself" rather than discernment.) She could remember a time when affectlessness and condescension were not the ambassadors of the contemporary art scene. She was also familiar with an earlier past in which she found much, as usual, to admire. From the essay on Serge: "To read Serge's memoirs is to be brought back to an era that seems very remote today in its introspective energies and passionate intellectual quests and code of self-sacrifice and immense hope: an era in which the twelve-year-olds of cultivated parents might normally ask themselves 'What is life?'"

The earlier part of the twentieth century was exciting to Sontag precisely because it demanded so much of people: dissidents, poets, henchmen—even 12-year-olds. But she never doubted that the convulsions of war, revolution and economic depression had led to disaster, and she offered no excuses for the crimes committed in the name of "the people." Having educated herself as thoroughly as she could about Bolshevism, Stalinism, Nazism and Phalangism, she was well placed to understand the long postwar period. Vietnam was relatively straightforward, but Solidarity in Poland and the war in Bosnia were not. To support Solidarity meant being lumped with other admirers of the unionized workers in Gdansk, notably Reagan and Thatcher, who didn't care for homegrown unions like PATCO or the National Union of Mineworkers. To call for intervention in Bosnia, or to endorse it in Kosovo, was to be regarded by many on the left as a dupe or a liberalistic warmonger who mistook NATO's expansion for a noble "humanitarianism."

Sontag moved confidently across this dangerous terrain and emerged more or less intact. All of the essays and speeches here were originally published or delivered

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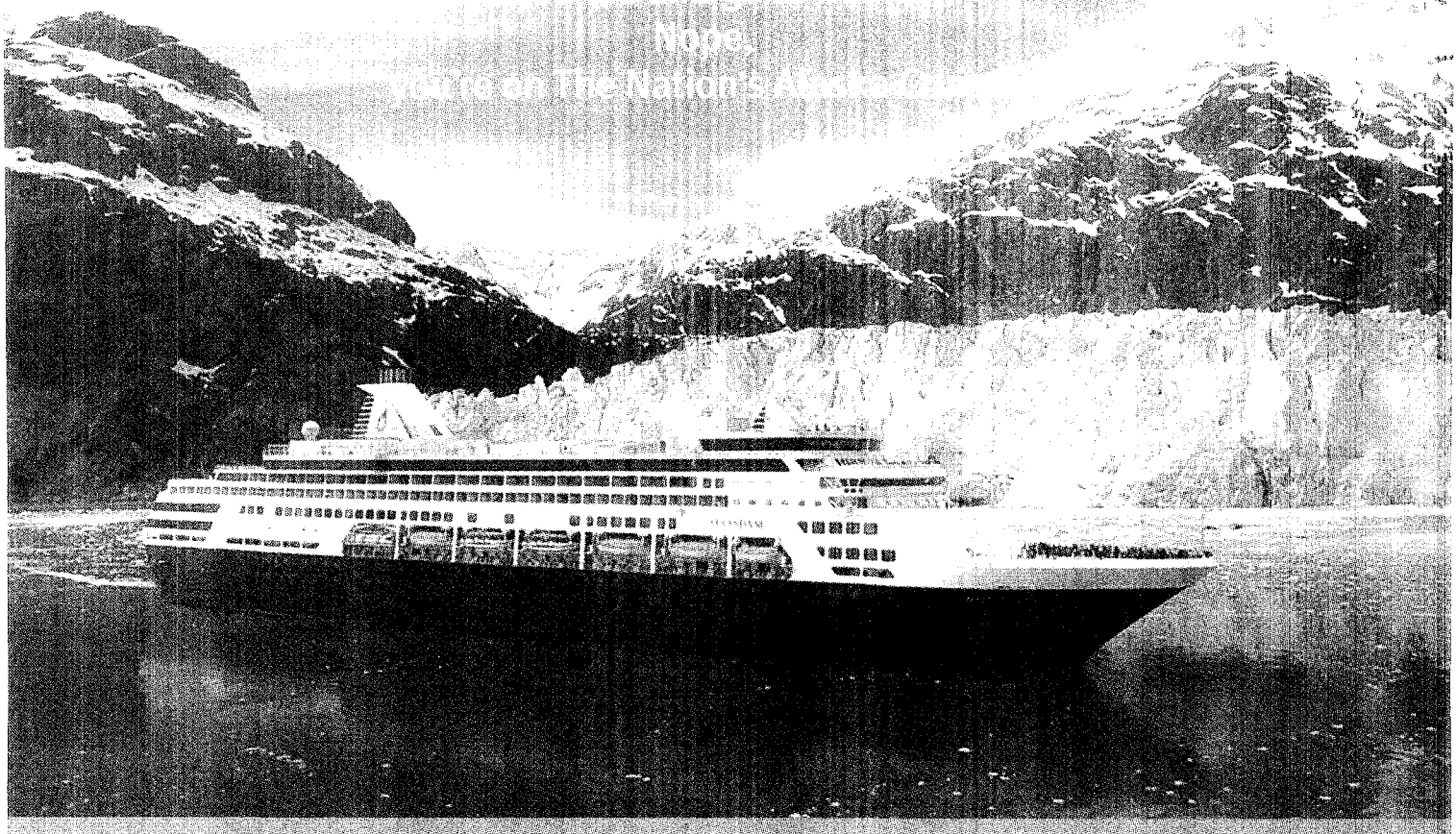

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post-millennium—and therefore post-Balkans—but the clarity of her earlier interventions is still in evidence, along with her high moral tone (not always attractive) and the faith in old-fashioned internationalism that had led her and the novelist Juan Goytisolo, among others, to compare Bosnia to the Spanish Civil War.

In several of these pieces she approaches literature with the internationalist assumptions that informed her politics. In "The World as India," the 2002 St. Jerome Lecture on Literary Translation, she commends the "libertarian inflection" of nineteenth-century European nationalism and the "progressive" ideal of national literatures, although Goethe's vision of "world literature," with which "the dignity and specificity of national languages...are entirely compatible," intrigues her more. As a keen young reader growing up in Arizona and California, she had run her own one-person study course in *Weltliteratur*, graduating from English novels to translations from Russian, French and German. "Literature was mental travel," she says in the same lecture. "Travel into the past...and to other countries.... And literature was criticism of one's own reality, in the light of a better standard."

In her acceptance speech at Frankfurt, where she received the 2003 Friedenspreis, she spoke of world literature as a way out of "the prison of national vanity." National vanity was not a vice she indulged in; she attended remarkably little to the literature of her own country when she was younger. Going back over her early passions, in "The World as India," she lists only four Americans: Poe, Helen Hunt Jackson, Louisa May Alcott and Jack London. It's the English, Scottish, Russians and Europeans who make the running. She caught up with America later, but only just. Her internationalism, like her love of Manhattan, was a fugitive's passion, rooted in a fear of anything resembling provincialism or ignorance.

Sontag was in Berlin when the Twin Towers came down, and her reaction, published in *The New Yorker*, is featured here in slightly adapted form. (In her first sentence—either a new one or something she reinstated—she refers to herself as "this appalled, sad American.") The "war on terror" has kept 9/11 alive, and her reflections with it: They still have the courage and incisiveness they had at the time. They are followed by a set of written answers, published in Italy a few weeks after the *New Yorker* piece, to questions put by the Italian leftist daily *Il Manifesto*: second thoughts that appear for the first time here in English. Both these pieces and a third, originally published in the *New York Times* a year after 9/11, are now back to back, as a sequence. In theory, they allow us to see how far Sontag was prepared to go in revising her initial response to the attacks.

In *The New Yorker* she castigated the Bush Administration and the American media for the way they dealt with 9/11. Some readers of this short, Olympian piece took her disapproval of the official reaction ("self-righteous drivel and outright deceptions") to be an approval of the attacks. In her replies for *Il Manifesto*, she stands by what she wrote. Her first impressions, she insists, were "all too accurate." But there is more to say: "To in any way excuse or condone this atrocity by blaming the United States—even though there has been much in American conduct abroad to blame—is morally obscene." Is she chiding others who have excused and condoned? Or is she thinking about something she said herself? For instance, that 9/11 was "an attack on the world's self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions." That sentence caused a bit of trouble. But whether or not you agree with it, it means to describe a process larger than the event itself. Description is not the same as approval or extenuation.

Sontag's internationalism, like her love of New York, was a fugitive's passion, rooted in a fear of anything resembling provincialism.

Elsewhere Sontag tells *Il Manifesto* she doesn't believe "that America has been provoking the Islamic world for years," and besides, she isn't happy with the category "Islamic world." She goes on to say that 9/11 was an assault on "modernity (the only culture that makes possible the emancipation of women) and, yes, capitalism." She believes it justifies an "armed response" in the form of a "complex and carefully focused set of counter-terrorist operations." This is not an outright contradiction of what she said earlier, but the change of tone is emphatic. She is much happier in the third piece, where she can assail the Bush Administration, denouncing its "jihad language" and asserting that a "war on terror" is not the same as the legitimate "right to hunt down the perpetrators of these crimes and their accomplices."

The really jarring shift comes in May 2004 with her piece about Abu Ghraib, "Regarding the Torture of Others." In *Il Manifesto* she announces that it would be "useless...as well as wicked—to bomb the oppressed people of Afghanistan." Two and a half years later she talks of "the quite justified invasion of Afghanistan." This is a big and rapid change for an intellectual to undergo—perhaps also a hostage to fortune, allowing her to remain in the conversation about US foreign policy as a staunch opponent of the war in Iraq. Some of her detractors had undergone big changes of their own in order to close that conversation down.

To read Sontag's 9/11 pieces now is to hear an eerie note reverberating from a story she wrote much earlier and published in her 1978 collection, *I, etcetera*. "Doctor Jekyll," a brilliant retelling of the Robert Louis Stevenson novella, is set mostly in contemporary New York and the Hamptons. Sontag loved Stevenson and does radical justice to his story by casting Jekyll and Hyde as separate individuals, the better to identify them, later on, as aspects of the same person. We first encounter them together in Manhattan. Hyde has arranged a meeting at the North Tower of the World Trade Center on a windswept Sunday in July. He chooses the WTC because it is "out of everyone's way." In this weekend wilderness, the two cross only for a few seconds: Hyde is unaccountably anxious and doesn't want to talk. Jekyll wanders into a deserted cafe across the street and watches with interest as his breathless double keeps rounding the corner every few minutes like a hamster in a cage.

Strictly speaking, this vivid, sinister series of images has nothing to do with Sontag's writings on 9/11. Even so, as you go back over her work you're startled by the curious afterlife it has acquired. Thirty years on, it's as if her Jekyll and Hyde had colonized a small patch of debris at the edge of Ground Zero and looked on impartially as the dust thickened and drifted across the world.

Sontag liked the Jekyll and Hyde story because she understood the dangerous liaison between vice and virtue. In her *Il Manifesto* interview she is maddened by talk of the struggle "between two rival civilizations, one productive, free, tolerant, and secular (or Christian), the other retrograde, bigoted, and vengeful." The way she'd understood America for most of her life, the atrocious Hyde had always gotten the better of the plausible Jekyll, and anytime she'd wanted "retrograde, bigoted, and vengeful," she'd never had far to look. In the

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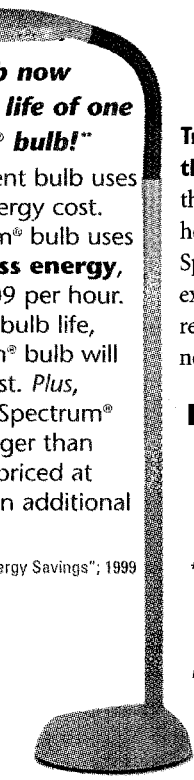
**Source: "Lighting the Way to Energy Savings"; 1999



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last political essay she wrote, about the Abu Ghraib scandal, she scorned Bush's assertion that "people who have been seeing those pictures didn't understand the true nature and heart of America." On the contrary, she argued, "the photos *are* us." The bunker politics and denunciations that came after 9/11 had unsettled her, but here she was once more, fluent and incensed and ready to take the consequences.

At the Same Time ends with a speech Sontag delivered in South Africa two months before the *Times Magazine* ran her Abu Ghraib article. It is an act of worship at the shrine of literature and an admission that the kind of writing she most admires may be a dying art, stifled by "our debauched culture," which "invites us to *simplify* reality, to *despise* wisdom." The picture she paints is extraordinarily bleak. Far from widening our horizons, the spread of information technology has shrunk our "ethical" world to the size of a mouse hole, while the grandeur of "modernity"—which she'd earlier identified as Al Qaeda's principal target—has been hollowed out by consumerism, voyeurism, "fantasies of eros and violence" and "demagogic appeals to cultural democracy that accompany...the ever-tightening grip of plutocratic capitalism." If fiction has a duty to "enlarge and complicate," she can't see it surviving for much longer. And a world without literature—"criticism of one's own reality"—is sure to lose what's left of its moral bearings. This is a kind of farewell speech. It is full of Sontag's affection for the art of storytelling, and full of anger about the philistinism she seemed to see all around her. It says something too about her sense of defeat in the wake of 9/11 and about her stoicism, which allowed her to plead her allegiance to "modernity," even though she found so much of it indefensible. ■

The Spoils of Indian Democracy

SIDDHARTHA DEB

IN SPITE OF THE GODS: The Strange Rise of Modern India. By Edward Luce. Doubleday. 356 pp. $26.

PLANET INDIA: How the Fastest-Growing Democracy Is Transforming America and the World. By Mira Kamdar. Scribner. 320 pp. $26.

There is a fundamental dissonance between lived experience and analysis that becomes pronounced at certain times, across particular cultures and in relation to certain subjects. Today this is especially true of books that look at people living on the margins of globalization, at groups whose assimilation into the model of neoliberal capitalism is still unfinished, still unpredictable. All too often, a writer crossing the border into other realms of existence chooses to ignore the dissonance, offering an analysis that hardly takes into account the difference between the way things look from the Western centers of neoliberal capitalism and the way life feels in the new capitalist outposts in Asia.

Such, at least, seem to be the overwhelming response of the journalists and scholars who have turned their gaze on China and India in the past few years, hoping, apparently, to discover in these two fastest-growing economies in the world some shape of the future. The interest is, on the one hand, perfectly justified. China and India together account for more than 2 billion people; both possess civilizational identities that predate anything in the Western world; and in each case these identities are inflected by the tremendous damage visited upon them by colonial powers. But an inquiry into China and India also serves other, less benign, intentions. As evident from the international business class strolling through the airports of India and China, these countries represent a success story for Western capitalism, a phenomenon that comes as a relief from the crisis in the imperial center, the quagmire in the Middle East and the dominoes toppling quietly but effectively in Latin America.

Even more than China, India seems to have emerged as a case study in effective Western indoctrination, leaving behind the reputation for chaos that once prompted John Kenneth Galbraith to describe it as "a functioning anarchy." As unabashedly capitalist as China, its cities similarly filled with new elites flaunting their wealth, India also possesses two attributes guaranteed to disarm the itinerant Western observer: democracy among the masses and fluent English among the elite. More than any other factors, these characteristics seem to explain the recent rhapsodies about India, from Thomas Friedman's *The World Is Flat* to the cover stories last year in *Newsweek*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Time* and *The Economist*.

For Western observers like Friedman democracy in India is like air-conditioning in a building. Once they know it's there, they don't have to think further about it. It is possible for them to settle down and enjoy the fact that most people in the building, including the service staff, speak English. This is what Friedman did in his whirlwind tour through the office parks of Bangalore, and what he discovered was that India is more or less like Kansas. The world is flat.

Yet experience suggests otherwise. Although the Indian metropolises and new suburbs display a runaway consumerism boosted by rising incomes and easy credit, this is an incomplete and superficial picture. The upper and middle classes benefiting from the new flows of capital, when examined closely, appear both self-centered and riven by paradoxes, seeking validation for their lives from Hindu evangelist gurus even as they acquire the latest consumer gadgets. The call-center and technology workers Friedman calls "zippies" no doubt manifest a Darwinian drive to earn more money, but they are equally likely to question the nature of their work; they are contradictory people capable of expressing chauvinist ideas about their foreign clients and empathy for the Western workers they are replacing. And these are only the upper layers of Indian society, their numbers remarkably small compared with the 350 million people who still live on less than a dollar a day.

In a provincial city like Bhopal, which is relatively untouched by globalization, Indians can appear far more complex than is suggested by reports in the foreign and national press. When one talks to the displaced peasants, slum dwellers and small entrepreneurs there, they express both frustration at their marginalization by the new economy and a healthy skepticism about the benefits it promises. Unlike most members of the English-speaking elite, who dismiss references to the colonial past as a hang-up of the left, for unprivileged and often uneducated Indians the point of comparison for multinational corporations remains the East India Company.

Siddhartha Deb is the author of The Point of Return *and* An Outline of the Republic *(both published by Ecco).*

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Some of this complexity of the Indian experience was captured well in an article written two years ago by *Financial Times* journalist Edward Luce. Oxford-educated and a former speechwriter to Lawrence Summers during the latter's term as Bill Clinton's Treasury Secretary—as the jacket informs us—Luce nevertheless demonstrated a remarkably firm grasp of the contradictions of India's rise as a superpower. Reporting from Gurgaon, the Delhi suburb that has gone from farmland to elite enclave in a decade, Luce described an encounter with a former army colonel who manages the suburb's first shopping mall:

> I ask him why everything in Gurgaon has a Californian name. The apartment high-rises are called Beverly Hills, Belvedere Towers, Silver Oaks, Windsor Court and West End Heights. The office blocks are called Royalton Towers, Icon Pinnacle, Plaza Tower and Gateway Tower. And the malls are prefixed by Metropolis, or Mega or Super or City. Which way is it to India? I joke.
>
> "We offer a total experience for the full family entertainment," says Bhutani, as we sip our cafe lattes. "It is a total all-round experience. You don't have to haggle in the retail outlets, the prices are fixed. You don't have to watch rats scurry across the floor in the cinema or worry the power supply will go. And afterwards you can eat in a restaurant with a clean kitchen and guaranteed quality."

The colonel's automaton speech is a revealing example of the Newspeak that passes for public discourse among India's elite, far more representative than the gnomic pronouncements of Friedman's zippies. And unlike Friedman, whose faith in liberal capitalism is shared by Luce, the latter is a good enough reporter to note that Gurgaon is a fantasy, a Sim City in concrete and glass that appears bewildering to most Indians.

Luce has since moved to Washington, and his book on India arrives as a summation of his reporting experience on the subcontinent. Unfortunately, the insightful, funny article he wrote for the *Financial Times* can be found only in a bowdlerized version in the book, crammed hurriedly and apologetically into the last chapter. It is as if Luce has suddenly remembered the Washington Consensus and the Summers memo, and the account in his book is strangely disembodied despite its claims to move away from "the detached and impersonal style that journalists follow."

As far as its neoliberal dogma goes, *In Spite of the Gods* doesn't offer much that is new. Luce visits a few places, talks to some people, fitting each experience and observation into its ritual slot. Modernization is good, traditionalism bad. Bureaucrats are corrupt, businessmen honest and efficient. When Luce meets social activists and villagers who speak of alternative ways of development that don't involve large-scale resettlement in urban slums, he finds them charming and moves on. "A hundred years ago, France was predominantly rural," he writes. "Now it is predominantly urban. But French culture lives on and so do its villages." When he interviews young Indian entrepreneurs who speak in marketing acronyms, he finds them funny but representative of the country's potential. When he has tea with technology barons who talk about the need to urbanize more rapidly, he nods approvingly as one of them says, "We have to embrace the future." There is nothing very objectionable or illuminating about any of this. It is a form of pilgrimage, where one casts some ritual stones at demons (the state, bureaucrats, unions), prostrates oneself a few times before the gods (IT executives, businessmen speaking in acronyms) and moves on, faith restored.

Luce's book is a competent summary of those aspects of India likely to be of interest to Western capital—the role of the state, the new business class, Hindu fundamentalism and the Muslim minority, India's relation to China and the United States. Should you invest your money in India? The answer is a guarded yes. Luce is clear-eyed in his analysis of the relations between India, China and the United States, seeing an emerging entente between the two Asian powers despite American efforts to promote India at the expense of China. But when he descends from the heady superstructure of geopolitics to consider India at the level of everyday existence, his details are necessarily selective in nature.

When Luce writes about the bloated Indian state and the widespread corruption in its ranks, he is quite right, even if such corruption doesn't seem qualitatively different from the enlightened market practices of Enron and Halliburton. When he notes that inefficient and costly state programs justified in the name of the poor end up disempowering the poor and subsidizing the rich, he makes a worthwhile point. But when he says that things have improved vastly in India since the opening up of its economy and the scaling back of the state in the early 1990s, and that "further liberalization would lead to higher growth and

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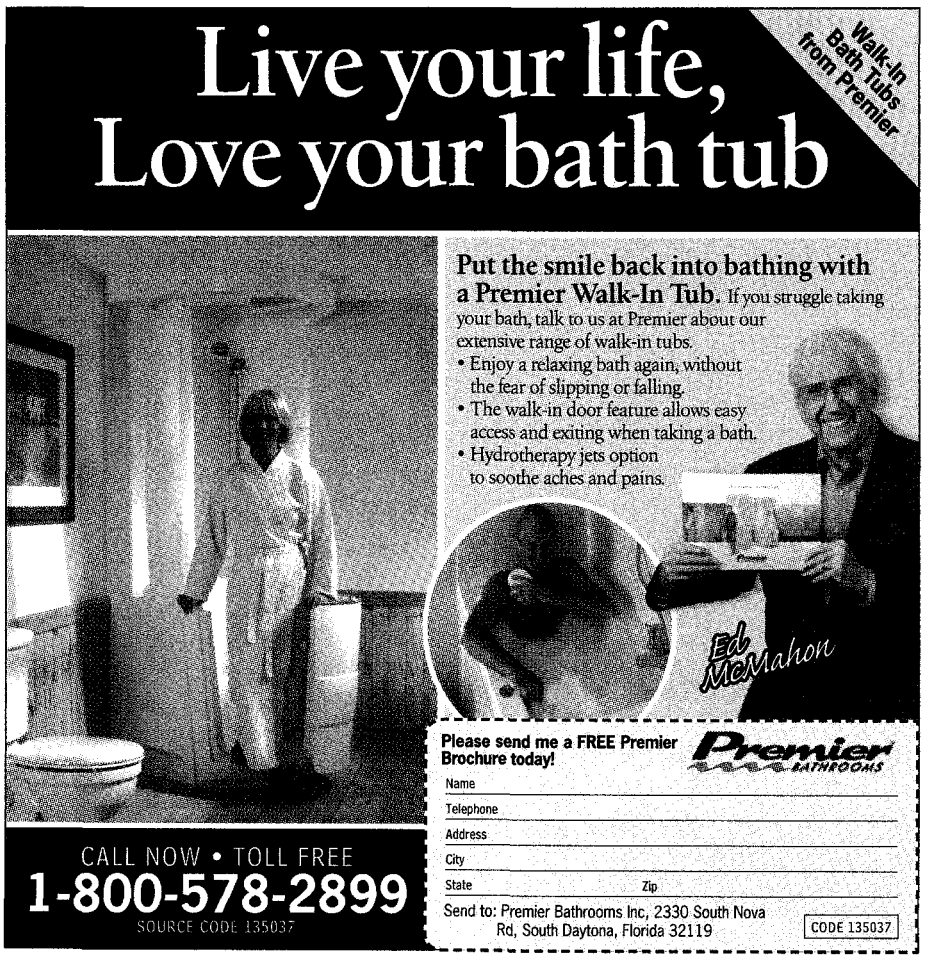
bring greater benefits," he is wrong.

There's no doubt things are much better for business executives and former army officers. It's easier to get a good cup of coffee in the cities and a mobile phone connection pretty much anywhere. Even in the small towns on the northeastern frontier, it's possible to buy a plasma TV (although next to impossible to buy a book other than *Harry Potter* or one by Paulo Coelho). In terms of economic growth, India's average of 8 percent is higher than it was before the globalization of its economy, although even then India's growth wasn't bad for a country devastated by two centuries of colonialism (about which Luce has relatively little to say except that it has become "fashionable since India's independence" to criticize Britain's presence in the subcontinent). But when it comes to the question of whether the new economy has benefited the majority of Indians, Luce refers us to the very state bureaucracy he derides elsewhere, noting without comment:

> According to the government of India, the proportion of Indians living in absolute poverty dropped from 35 percent to just over 25 percent between 1991 and 2001. The ratio is likely to have dropped further since then.

In fact, the figures provided by the Indian government depend on a survey methodology that has been changed since the economy opened up, rendering simple comparisons with earlier measures of poverty quite meaningless. Other assessments show either a slight decline in poverty or none at all. Like the World Bank estimates that show there are fewer poor people in the world than before, estimates that have been challenged persuasively by Sanjay Reddy and Thomas Pogge in their paper "How *Not* to Count the Poor" (www.socialanalysis.org), the Indian government's figures on poverty serve less as an indicator of the way things are and more as an illustration of how to spin the facts to fit your needs.

It is not hard to understand this need to show that things are better than they really are. The sudden explosion of wealth among India's upper classes, looked upon approvingly by the West, has created fresh anxieties. The divide between rich and poor in India is not a creation of the last decade, but the utter separation between winners and losers is, a condition in which it becomes both easy and necessary to point out all that shines brightly under the tropical sun. Yet the software parks and glass-and-steel office towers working round the clock are easily portrayed; what is less obvious is their relation to the parched soil of the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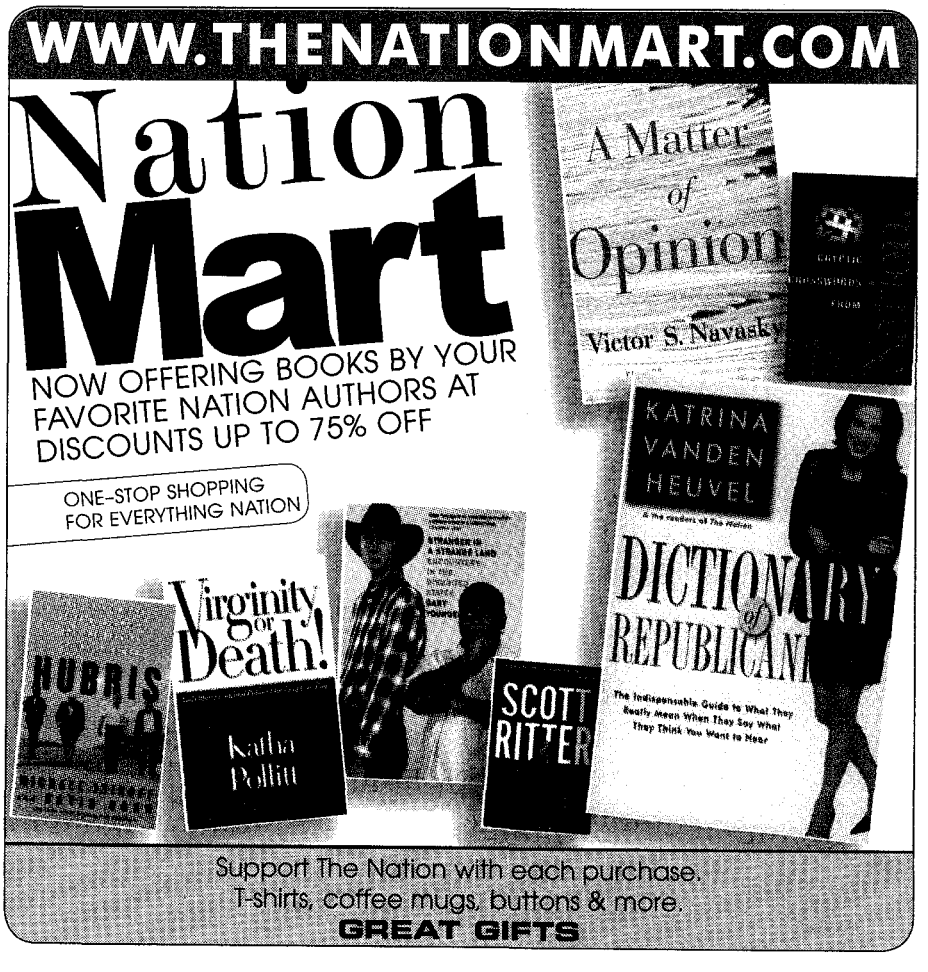
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farmlands, where 25,000 farmers have killed themselves in a decade. The feverish business speculation and late-night parties of what the Indian media call "Page Three people" are no doubt colorful, exciting affairs; yet they go on at the same time as entire villages are submerged by dammed rivers and new slums arise on the outskirts of Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore.

Where Luce's book attempts to engage this other reality, it does so unevenly. Traveling to Patna, capital of India's poorest state, Bihar, Luce seems so baffled by the conjunction of shabby infrastructure and mass politics that he falls back on clichés:

> In Hyderabad there are as many five-star hotels as you would find in any Western city. Most of them offer a seamless "wifi" service so you can connect to the Internet by laptop from anywhere in the building. At Patna's best hotel the crackle on the internal phone system was so noisy you could not communicate with the receptionist.... Naturally, Internet access was unthinkable. Likewise, although often clogged with traffic, Hyderabad's roads are paved and smooth. Meanwhile in Patna, a city of three million people, there is not a single functioning traffic light. Such is the reigning inertia, the city has not even changed the colonial names of its streets. I got a kick out of driving up and down Boring Road. It was named after a British official.

This account is perfectly believable, but the failure of the state in Bihar runs deeper than the absence of wifi access in Patna hotels. It is a subject that has been explored with insight and empathy by, among others, the Patna-born writer Amitava Kumar in his books *Bombay London New York* and *Husband of a Fanatic*. The rise of the oppressed castes as a political force in Bihar, a phenomenon Luce notes as having contributed significantly to the decaying infrastructure and the breakdown of law, is in itself a response to the long, brutal domination of the upper castes. The abysmal social and economic conditions in the state are not simply products of lower-caste assertion or state socialism but of the inequality enforced through decades by dominant groups of civil servants, businessmen, politicians and landlords. Because of this, Bihar remains a state where Dalits (at the very bottom of the caste order) are murdered with impunity. And until recently, Dalits retaliating against upper-caste landlords were charged under a terrorism law while upper-caste men accused of killing Dalits were booked under the usual criminal code.

Some of the weakness in Luce's account seems to come from his belief that the efficient entrepreneurs of the new economy are very different people from the corrupt functionaries of the Indian state. Yet evidence suggests otherwise, indicating that it is the same social layer—upper-caste, Hindu, middle- and upper-class—that reaps most of the benefits, whether these are filtered through the state or through capital. This is true of most of the engineers and business executives competing in the global marketplace today, people reared largely on government salaries and nurtured in state-subsidized institutions, and who today furiously protest affirmative action or subsidies for the lower castes, aboriginal people and other marginalized groups. The new elites may speak better English, but their sense of hierarchy remains undisturbed.

If Luce's book is shaped by the rigid certainties of neoliberalism, Mira Kamdar's account of how India is changing the world is fueled by a breathless enthusiasm that seems to have less to do with economics and more to do with identity.

An Indian-American scholar at the Asia Society, Kamdar is an enthusiast of most things Indian and has clearly done extensive research for this book. As a result, *Planet India* contains nuggets of information on everything from the animation industry in India to a party at Tavern on the Green for Mira Nair's new film:

> At the cocktail party preceding the screening, the Who's Who list of the Indian diaspora cultural elite went on endlessly. I did catch celebrated actress and author Madhur Jaffrey, just out with her memoir *Climbing the Mango Trees*, and her husband, accomplished violinist Sanford Allen. Filmmaker Jagmohan Mundhra... and his wife, Chandra, and their film producer daughter, Smriti Mundhra, were there. I saw Sarita Choudhury, who starred in Mira Nair's film *Mississippi Masala*.

I'm sure Kamdar enjoyed herself, even if there were people she missed in the huge crowd.

In India, she covers a wide terrain and a great breadth of subjects, including the obvious divide between the upper classes and the majority, the distress in rural areas and the overwhelming environmental crisis. Kamdar is clearly liberal in her worldview, critical of Wal-Mart, American inequality and the elite Indians who worship at the shrines of Wal-Mart and American-

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style inequality. But too much of her book is taken up by smooth-toned capitalists who assure her that they will "create purchasing power and turn India's poor into consumers," which sounds more like a threat than a promise, and who say, "Our biggest challenge is the challenge nobody has solved in the world: how to grow equity," which sounds like hokum.

Both books reveal, if in different ways, how significant India's business class has become in shaping perceptions of the country. Ostensibly suffering under the weight of the state, they have nevertheless managed to accumulate great wealth and are in the process of discovering solutions to inequality, social injustice and environmental degradation. In that sense, Indian businessmen—especially those in technology—spout the rhetoric of "frictionless capitalism" that enriches the individual while saving the world. Slavoj Zizek, writing in *The London Review of Books* about the originators of this idea—Bill Gates and his "court-philosophers" like Friedman—noted how they offer a geeky smartness as the solution to all the world's problems:

> Being smart means being dynamic and nomadic, and against centralised bureaucracy; believing in dialogue and cooperation as against central authority; in flexibility as against routine; culture and knowledge as against industrial production; in spontaneous interaction and autopoeisis as against fixed hierarchy.

Zizek observes that this kind of corporate philanthropy simply involves giving with one hand what has been grabbed with the other. In India, however, there seems to be more grabbing than giving going on, reminding us of what Marx said of the British in India: They had to first get India in order to subject it afterward to their sharp philanthropy.

In any case, the frictionless capitalism in India reveals its sharp edges if you rub it long enough. When Luce visits the Art of Living Foundation near Bangalore to visit Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, a guru equally popular in Bangalore's boardrooms and in Manhattan penthouses, he finds:

> On the pillars that supported the dome around the central stage were the symbols of the world's main religions: the Islamic Crescent, the Star of David, and the Cross of Jesus. In the center, much larger than the other representations, was a depiction of Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth.

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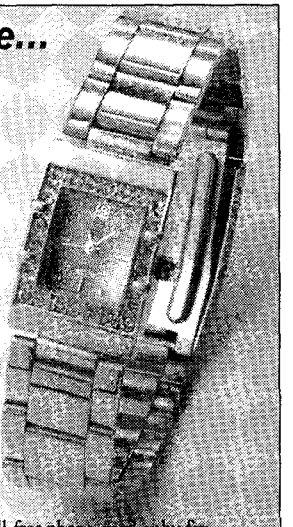

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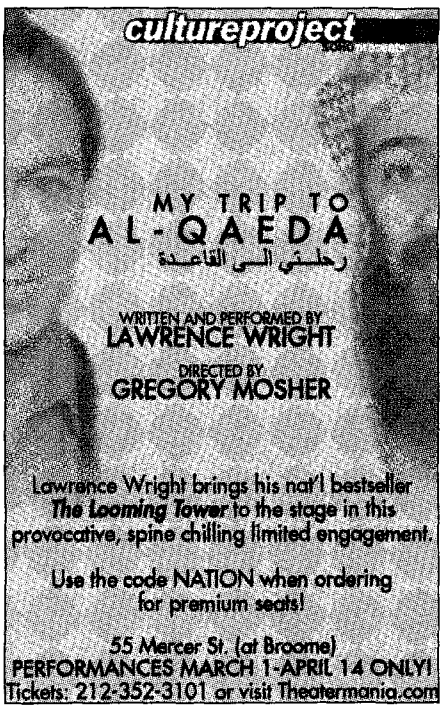
have "a close attachment to the RSS," the right-wing Hindu organization that drew inspiration from Hitler and Mussolini and whose history of violence ranges from the assassination of Gandhi to more recent massacres of Muslim and Christian minorities. Luce's book is especially good on Hindu fundamentalism, reporting superbly on the strange convergence of science, business, paranoia and fascism that characterizes the right in India. It is not an accident that the "biofuturologist" Luce meets should be spouting nonsense about the "software" of human development intrinsic to India (naturally) and the "hardware" of the West, nor that he was encountered at the residence of a "prosperous industrialist."

There is, of course, much more to India than the corrupt state, right-wing Hinduism and unctuous businessmen. In fact, what is surprising is the number of Indians skeptical of the direction the country has been taken by its comprador elites, although their voices tend to go unrecorded by media obsessed with telling the most obvious story. The experience of these other Indians who dwell outside boardrooms can be depicted, but this can be done only by books that address what it means to be human in a time and place of great change. It requires writing that takes its own possibilities seriously, eschewing the language of the press release and the annual corporate report, choosing a form true to experience, whether this be the novel or the work of social reportage.

There are already books that show how it can be done, from the sharp, pungent essay collections put out by Arundhati Roy to *Temptations of the West* by Pankaj Mishra and *Maximum City* by Suketu Mehta. And if the subterranean murmurs are anything to go by, it seems that there are still other writers willing to examine the experience of India critically and with empathy, who take their inspiration not from Friedman but from Barbara Ehrenreich in how to bring a hidden world to light. Because otherwise, there is only the glib promise of capitalism, no different from what the Red Queen says to Alice: "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!" ■



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FILMS

The Thing

STUART KLAWANS

THE HOST • THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY • THE NAMESAKE

Nothing frightens us more than the dark, said the legendary Hollywood producer Jonathan Shields; so if you're shooting a horror movie, get rid of that extra in the moth-eaten cat suit, turn down the lights and let the encompassing shadows creep up and scare people. Sage advice, if your budget is low and your thrills psychological. And yet, though some dread things really are better left to the imagination, having migrated there from the murkier corners of the heart, others lead public lives and demand to be out in plain view. Prehistoric beasts awakened by nuclear bombs, hideous colonizers from outer space, birds of a small-town America so blandly pretty that it could kill you: These are monsters from the social order, not the id, and therefore must come into daylight.

So it is with the huge, bellowing, umbrella-fanged, people-eating, hump-backed amphibian marauder that stars in Bong Joon-ho's *The Host*. Give it an audience, and this slithering colossus will perform upside-down back flips while hanging from a bridge, or flourish its tail with teasing, lewd gestures. Making its debut at midday in a popular riverfront park, the showoff runs up and back through the crowd, providing multiple viewing opportunities to the throng that's trying to escape it and offering a marvelous spectacle to commuters riding by on an elevated train. Whether this hyper-steroidal tadpole enjoys giving such a performance, I can't say; but I feel Bong's pleasure in showing it from many ingenious angles, in many acts of exuberant athleticism.

You, too, are expected to take pleasure in the display, which is half the point of devising a coming-out party that's so public in nature, and so uproarious (in both the common and literal senses). The other half of the point is to establish that every resident of Seoul, Korea, knows this monster is abroad. Yet the authorities—which ultimately means the Americans—ignore the obtrusively large threat, preferring to hunt small things: the microbes they insist the beast is spreading and the few hapless, silly humans who are presumably infected.

Not being one to force political interpretations onto a film, I will ignore the obtrusively large allegorical possibilities of this story and just call *The Host* a

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family movie. Those silly humans are Mr. Park (Byun Hee-bong), the grizzled, old-fashioned proprietor of a concession stand on the Han River esplanade; his three adult children (all of them chronic screw-ups); and his 12-year-old granddaughter, Hyun-seo (Ko A-sung), who scarcely gets to introduce herself to the audience before being swallowed by the monster, plaid middle-school uniform and all.

This engorgement is actually the beginning of Hyun-seo's story, not the end, since she's the functional member of the family. As for her elders, you may judge their abilities by the offerings they place before Hyun-seo's memorial photograph: tokens of failure, all. Aunt Nam-joo (Bae Doo-na), a competitive archer, presents the latest of her bronze medals. Uncle Nam-il (Park Hae-il), once a student radical and now just a ranter, sets down the whiskey bottle he's been guzzling. Father Gang-du (Song Kang-ho), a pudgy, sleepy goofball with dyed blond hair, doesn't have even that much to offer. He's got only tears, plus a used ramen cup filled with coins filched from the concession stand. These are the people on whom Hyun-seo has been forced to rely. Brought together now in an emergency shelter, they weep, wail, get into a four-way wrestling match, collapse onto the floor (in a shot taken from above, the better to show the choreography of the sprawl) and then demand to know what everybody's looking at.

The Host is many things, some of them icky. Above all, though, it is the story of how these slapstick figures rise painfully to the level of competence, and beyond. Somewhere in the soggy atmosphere they traverse, amid the maze of concrete sluiceways and hospital curtains that Bong so cleverly sets up for them, I glimpsed a suggestion that other Koreans, too, ought to become competent, and stop being so accommodating to foreign bodies lodged in their system.

It was just a thought—but a daylight one.

The title of Ken Loach's latest movie, *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, could make you think he'd shot a landscape film; and so he did, in a sense, since the most common image in the picture is a spacious view of the rolling green Irish countryside around Cork, with armed men sneaking through its folds. The setting is rural, except for brief forays into town. The period is 1920–22: years when the Irish Republican Army fought against British forces and then against its former comrades, who had accepted the compromise of the Irish Free State.

This being a Loach film, written by his frequent collaborator Paul Laverty, you can expect real historical debate from it, if not a full historical synopsis. When the treaty of 1921 is signed with Britain and the characters must decide if they will honor its terms, they do so in a bristling, omnidirectional scene that touches on much more than the fate of Ulster. Shut inside a small, bare room, hungry men dressed in vests and cloth caps argue about endemic poverty and entrenched property rights, Republican principle and imperialist realpolitik, and they do it with everything they've got, since they've already staked their lives. Loach has directed a scene like this before, in his Spanish Civil War drama *Land and Freedom*; and here, as in that picture, the debate becomes the movie's improbable high point, despite the surrounding raids and ambushes.

But even during this talky climax, *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* has the rhythm peculiar to landscape films. The seasons go through their cycle; violence recurs (some-

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times in exactly the place where you saw it before); and, in the debate scene, a line of reasoning you'd heard early in the film comes back again, this time used against the man who had first advanced it.

He is Damien O'Donovan (Cillian Murphy), a medical student who had intended to turn his back on the Republican cause and go to London for his internship, except that he couldn't leave on the train, the British troops having beaten the engineer senseless. In a more conventional narrative, this assault at the train station would have shaken Damien out of his complacency and turned him into a fighter. The British occupation would then have figured in the movie as a mere plot contrivance, existing to advance a character. In Loach's film, though, the station incident is already the second brutality that Damien has witnessed, without his being central to either scene. He is a protagonist who lives in the middle distance, in shots usually populated by half a dozen other characters; and for all his intelligence, he's as likely as any of us to be blown about by circumstance.

In outline his story is simple, and awful too. Damien joins a band of Republicans (having seen no alternative) and so is drawn into actions that may be necessary but tear at his soul. "I studied anatomy for five years, to shoot a man in the head. I hope this Ireland we're fightin' for is worth it." Then, to make good on the terrible things he's done, he goes on fighting even after his political leaders tell him to lay down his weapons. Although his war brings Damien the friendship of a good comrade (Liam Cunningham) and the love of young Sinead (Orla Fitzgerald), he ultimately loses both.

In fact, he loses everything. And Loach persuades you that Damien was right.

You see how *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* might have oppressed you. Or it might have made you groan at melodramatic complications, since the milieu is tiny and most of its characters have known one another forever. (You sense their intimacy in every scene, even though the back stories are scrupulously unrecounted.) That's why the landscape feels so important. The film needs an element that's lovely, abiding and indifferent to lend it a higher sort of fatalism. The merely human kind is represented by a bonneted grandmother who won't leave her native cottage even after the British have burned it. "I'll clean the chicken coop," she insists, prompting Sinead (and perhaps you) to wail, "I don't want to end up like her! I want to have somethin' in my life!"

The film also needs an actor who can seem as natural and open as the landscape. So it has Murphy—a brilliant performer, but indelibly odd. In long shot, with his big round head overhanging a skinny frame, he seems like the live-world equivalent of Jack Skellington in *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. In close-up (which Loach avoids), he arrests you with his icy eyes, carved cheeks and pushed-out baby lips. Just through his physical presence, Murphy will stand out in any role he's given: a mad psychiatrist in *Batman Begins*, a hit man in *Red Eye*, a heroic transvestite in *Breakfast on Pluto*. But here, despite appearing in almost every scene, he somehow blends in with the surroundings. Murphy leads the cast while being completely one with it. He plays Damien to the core without indulging in a single moment of acting. I think he's beyond praise.

The Wind That Shakes the Barley won the Palme d'Or at last year's Cannes festival, to the puzzlement of those who prefer a bolder, more outgoing style of cinema. I'm one of them, sometimes. But the grain of the title puts me in mind of everything that nourishes you in the film: its frankness, probity, care and intelligence, offered not just in crumbs but as a whole loaf. I wish this could be our daily bread.

Let me get the bad news out of the way. There are scenes in Mira Nair's *The Namesake*—just a few—that are written, played and directed as lumpishly as a telenovela. The film's overall rhythm lurches rather than flows; and I have no idea, none, of the meaning of the central conceit. The main character, a young American man of Bengali background, must choose whether to accept the awkward name he was given at birth: Gogol, as in Nikolai. In the source novel by Jhumpa Lahiri, the full resonance of this name must surely emerge; but I haven't gotten around to reading the book, and I don't think Nair should punish me for it.

Now the good news. There are weddings, parties and a funeral in the movie. Nair knows exactly what to do with these. As a director, she has the instincts of a great hostess—which I mean as high praise. Frederick Elmes shot the picture. You've never seen colors that are so bright and so soft at the same time. The narrative (apart from the Gogol business) is perfectly clear about its central concerns: immigration, acculturation, in-betweenness. These are familiar issues, but with her Indian subject matter Nair makes them moving in fresh ways. Best of all, the main characters are played by Irrfan Khan as the sweet, gentle father; Tabu as the game but dislocated mother; and the irrepressible Kal Penn as Gogol. You will be happy to spend two hours in such good company. ■

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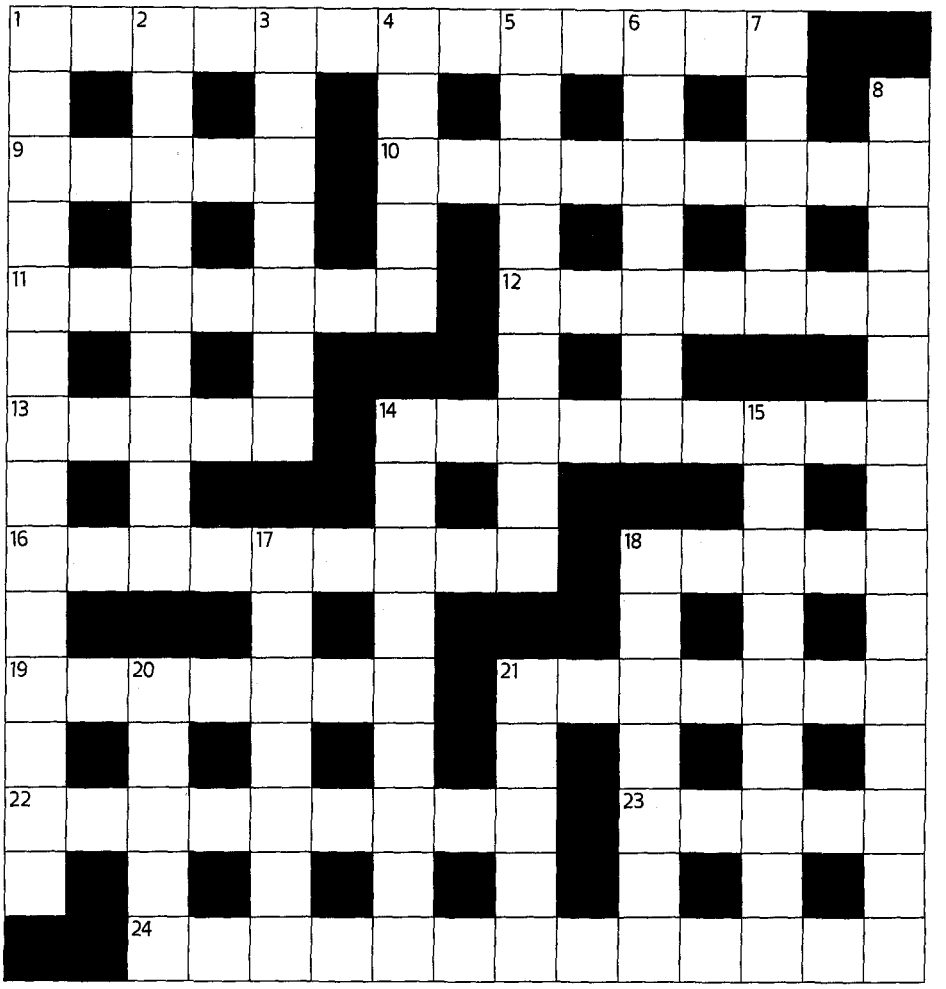


ACROSS

1 What new Presidents become might involve woodworking, of a sort. (7-6)

9 A not quite horizontal protection for the housewife. (5)

10 One that the poet had never seen dillowing in his armor. (9)

11 If you have several thousand of these, it might show you have talent. (7)

12 Not well lit coming back to earth in Texas and Michigan. (7)

13 What goes with the reel, not out with the sculptor. (5)

14 If things get rough for you, this might help. (9)

16 They might walk along the Bois de Boulogne. (9)

18 Supposedly savage tamer. (5)

19 They have sugar and extracts of orange flowers. (Is that what makes them so great?) (7)

21 The 20 down that was great in the mild oath of man at one time. (7)

22 I accomplish a round number when I make the sound of an arrow in worshiping fashion. (9)

23 A half child's train, which might call for a "Bless you!" (5)

24 Their way is supposedly bad. (13)

DOWN

1 When Santa gets left up on what trouble-makers raise (with first-class return) you don't want to be in narrow places with it. (14)

2 One might serve you a drink, yet forbid payment. (9)

3 Is little Nancy anxious to be seen in China? (7)

4 Mates in trouble with either side of the game. (5)

5 Get yourself a rifle with a final word on the little street coming up here—and other weapons. (9)

6 Finished as the soup and the ketchup did. (5,2)

7 The point, alas, is wrong—but might show good taste. (5)

8 Fancy title for old computers! Why not speakers and writers as well? (4-10)

14 Relative to those on the rocks in California, they should keep you dry. (9)

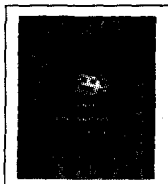
15 A pitch, so I gather, is a bit crazy—in fact very nutty! (9)

17 What you might step on at the door, when coming up in a final setting for what keeps you going. (7)

18 Miss West—and in trouble with a point made by other frenzied women. (7)

20 See 21 across—it might haunt you! (5)

21 Newspaper term for the basketball star, who seems to be a lion tamer. (5)



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	B		M		N		A		E		A		L	
T	A	K	E	O	F	F	S		R	I	G	G	E	D
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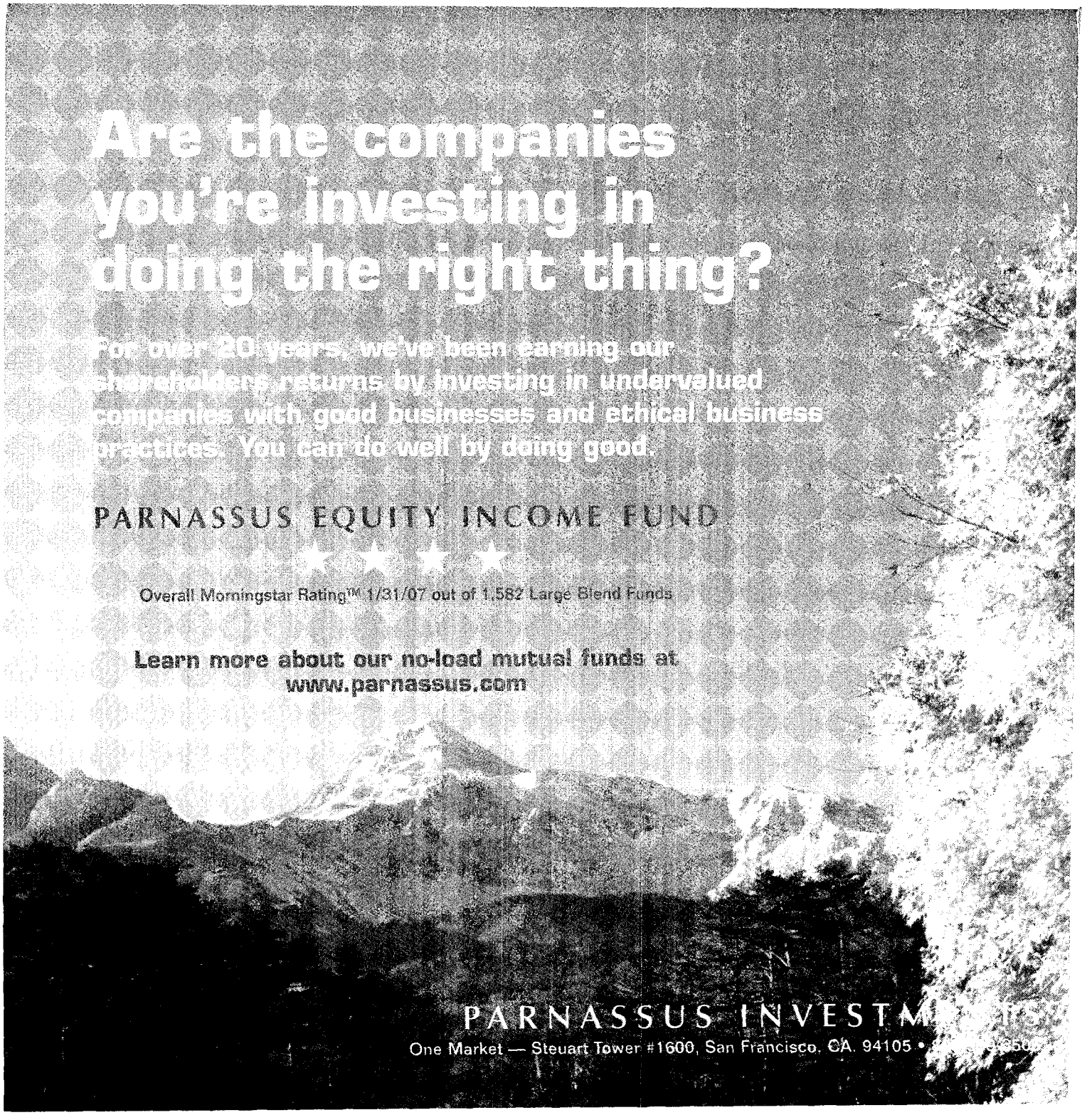
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